



Islamabad POST

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Denmark to hold vote on joining EU defence pact: PM Frederiksen

Detailed News On Page-06

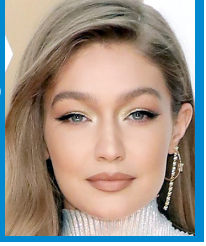
Calm mind needed to solve Ukraine crisis

Detailed News On Page-07



Gigi Hadid to donate earnings to Ukraine, Palestine

Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

Former President Rafiq Tarar passes away

LAHORE: Former President Muhammad Rafiq Tarar passed away after protracted illness at a local hospital in the provincial metropolis on Monday. He was 92. Muhammad Rafiq Tarar was currently serving as Chairman Nazria Pakistan Trust. He has left behind three sons and a daughter among the mourners. Former President Muhammad Rafiq Tarar's funeral prayers will be offered at Jamia Ashrafia, Main Ferozpur Road at 4:45 pm this afternoon. — APP

President Xi condemns terror attack

BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping on Monday strongly condemned a terrorist attack in Peshawar on Friday in which many precious lives were lost. President Xi, in a message to his Pakistani counterpart Dr Arif Alvi, also expressed deep condolences, on behalf of the Chinese government and the people, to the victims and extended sincere sympathies to the injured and the bereaved families. "China strongly condemns the terrorist attack and firmly supports efforts made by the Pakistani government and the people to fight terrorism, maintain stability in the country and protect the people's safety," Xi said. — Agencies

Farrukh slams PML-N

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD, Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Farrukh Habib Monday reminded Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Vice President Maryam Nawaz of her family's servitude to the West for protecting their estates built abroad through ill-gotten money. "Prime Minister Imran Khan presented his stance before the West 'freely' unlike you (Sharif family) who are supportive of the servile mindset," he responded to the tweet of Maryam.

PM for swift persecution of terrorists

—Chairs meeting of the Apex Committee on National Action Plan; says "nefarious designs to destabilise the country" would never succeed

SHUJAAT HAMZA / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan said Monday the government has a zero-tolerance policy for terrorists and swift persecution is required to set an example out of terrorist elements. The prime minister's comments came as he chaired a meeting of the Apex Committee on National Action Plan (NAP) in Islamabad, a statement from the PM Office said. The Apex Committee strongly condemned the Peshawar attack and offered condolences for the martyrs who lost their lives in the attack, the statement read. During the meeting, the prime minister emphasised that a multi-pronged approach, full-spectrum and vigorous implementation of NAP was required to thwart the threat of terrorism. He stressed taking proactive measures to tackle such incidents in future. The premier further stated that "nefarious designs to destabilise the country" would never succeed as the entire nation is united to defeat the menace of terrorism.

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'Foreign forces want destabilization'



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Interior Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed on Monday while asserting that a big terrorist network has been unearthed in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), said that foreign

Continued on Page 06

Gives 24 hours ultimatum to PM Bilawal criticizes PM for his tirade against the EU



LALAMUSA: Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addressing a public rally in Lalamusa. Qamar Zaman Kaira and Raja Pervez Ashraf also seen.

YOOSUF BHUTTA / GULZAR NOSHI

GUJRAT/LALAMUSA: Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Monday criticized Prime Minister Imran Khan for his tirade against the European Union ambassadors' letter, which they had demanded of the Pakistan govt to condemn the Russian invasion of Ukraine. While addressing a public rally in Lalamusa, Bilawal Bhutto said European Union is Pakistan's biggest trading partner

adding a lot of Pakistanis from district Gujrat were residing various EU countries. He said these Pakistanis are sending in huge foreign exchange. Severing of relations with the EU states would damage Pakistani economy, he added. He said that the warm welcome of Long March by the people of Gujrat had shaken the Government House of Islamabad. PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari here on

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan chairs a meeting of the Apex Committee on National Action Plan (NAP). — DNA

Indonesia's Bali opens to int'l visitors

No quarantine required; PCR test upon arrival

AGENCIES

JAKARTA: International travelers who have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19 are allowed to visit the Indonesian resort island of Bali without any quarantine process starting Monday, a senior official said. International visitors are only required to show proofs of hotel bookings for a minimum of four days and certificates showing negative results of COVID-19, besides having health insurance upon their arrivals on the holiday island, according to Coordinating Minister for Maritime and Investment Affairs Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan. "International travelers have to undergo PCR (polymerase chain reaction) tests upon entry. After getting negative results, they can be free to do their activities under health protocols," Pandjaitan told a virtual press conference, adding that on the third day of international tourists' arrivals, they need to take additional PCR tests at their respective hotels.

Opp. leaders meet to finalise no-trust move

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: A meeting among the Opposition leaders Maulana Fazlur Rehman, Shahbaz Sharif, and Asif Ali Zardari has started to finalise the date to move the no-confidence motion against Prime Minister Imran Khan.

The meeting took place at the Zardari House and PML-N leaders Khawaja Saad Rafique and Ayaz Sadiq are also in attendance, meanwhile, PML-N Secretary-General Ahsan Iqbal, Rana Sanaullah, Adviser to Chief Minister of Sindh on Law and PML-N Vice-President Maryam Nawaz have also joined the meeting. Earlier, PDM chief and PPP leader Khurshid Shah had said that the date to present the no-confidence motion will be announced soon. During the joint press conference, Shah reiterated that move will be brought about at the earliest to get rid of the PTI-led government. Speaking to journalists, Fazl said that the nation will get the expected results within 48 hours. Talking about PM Khan, he said: "He is someone who uses foul language, he cannot threaten us." The JUI leader said that he has no contact with PTI's Jahangir Tareen. "Whether the motion fails or succeeds, it is a political process and constitutional right."

Opposition's no-trust 'bubble' to burst soon

DNA

ISLAMABAD, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain on Monday equated the opposition's hullabaloo over the so-called no-trust drama to a "bubble", which would burst soon. "The current political situation is like a bubble, which will burst soon," he said while talking to media persons after the meeting of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) Core Committee, chaired by Prime Minister Imran Khan. Dispelling the

Continued on Page 06

Maryam mocks PM Imran's speech

DNA

LAHORE: PML-N Vice-President Maryam Nawaz reacted to the premier's speech and said that "Imran Khan has not only cursed and threatened the Opposition, but he has done the same to other countries as well." Taking to Twitter, Maryam added that the premier "does not have a right to put Pakistan at a disadvantaged position due to his political disagreements." "Shut him in a room, or else if a monkey gets hold of a matchstick, there would be a threat of fire!" she ironically wrote, suggesting that the no-confidence motion is vital in order to get PM Imran off his seat.

PM for solving Ukraine crisis through 'dialogue'



NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan received a telephone call from European Council President Charles Michel on Monday and reiterated the call for finding a solution to the Russia-Ukraine conflict through "dialogue and diplomacy". The premier posted the update on Twitter, saying he shared concerns over the continued military conflict, highlighted its adverse economic impact on developing countries

and stressed the urgent need for a ceasefire and de-escalation. "I emphasised the importance of humanitarian relief and reiterated [the] call for a solution through dialogue and diplomacy. We agreed that countries like Pakistan could play a facilitating role in this endeavour. I look forward to close engagement to promote shared objectives," he said. Later, in a detailed statement, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said PM Imran expressed "deep concern" over the military conflict and stressed that further escalation would have a negative impact on the region and the world. "The prime minister added that he had been persistently highlighting the adverse economic impact of conflict on developing countries," the statement said. Emphasising

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Calm, rational mind needed to solve Ukraine crisis: China — Page 07

Russia opens humanitarian corridors to Ukrainian cities — Page 08

IS presence may cause bloodshed in Afghanistan

At that time, around three thousands IS fighters were arrested by joint forces whereas others, mostly from Uzbekistan and other Central Asian countries, slipped into Northern Afghanistan

ANALYSIS

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: It is premature to say something about the future of Taliban regime but their rule is likely to plunge Afghanistan into another era of proxy war in the wake of undeclared war against the militants associated with the Islamic States of Afghanistan and Pakistan (IS Khurasan) also called Daaesh. After arrests or mysterious killing of hundreds of its militants, the IS received another setback with making public surrender of Abdul Rahim Muslim Dost. The surrender of one of the founding leader of Islamic States (IS) Afghanistan and Pakistan commonly known as Daaesh made public in Jalalabad, headed quarter of Kunar province couple of days back. Accompanied by Eastern Zone Taliban intelligence Chief Dr. Bashir, Abdul Rahim Muslim Dost while declaring his surrender to the Taliban government,

had also made allegiance in public before Governor of Nangarhar. While making his allegiance to Taliban, Abdul Rahim Muslim Dost confessed that he had already surrendered and joined Taliban around six months back but now he was formally making the decision public.

Muslim Dost background
Belonging to Kot district of border Nangarhar province of Afghanistan, Abdul Rahim Muslim Dost is counted from Ahli Hadith school of thoughts. During Afghan war he was associated with Jumaat Ul Dawa Wal Ishaat headed by Maulvi Jamil Ur Rahman. However, after death of Maulvi Jamil Ur Rahman his differences developed with his nephews Haji Hayat Ullah and Haji Rooh Ullah. And he switched over to Hizbe Islami Afghanistan headed by Gulbadin Hekmatyar. But after empowering of Taliban, he joined Taliban. And on such grounds, especially his extremist beliefs, Muslim Dost was first arrested by Pakistan secret agencies and later on handed over

to the US secret agencies. Abdul Rahim Muslim Dost remained US prisoner in Guantanamo jail for around eight years when he wrote a book in Pushto, "Matay Zowlani" (Broken chains). In this book, Muslim Dost had made his best of what he claimed "exposing Pakistan intentions by patronizing and financing the continued proxy war on the soil of Afghanistan. Like former Ambassador and Taliban founding leader Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef, Muslim Dost had also criticized Pakistan for looking after "affairs across the border in Afghanistan." But despite using worst kind of negative remarks and words against Pakistan, Muslim Dost's presence and luxurious boarding and lodging, is generating stock of questions.

However, some of the credible Afghan analysts believe that during imprisonment Muslim Dost developed "understandings with US." And he returned after release with huge US and Euro currencies in war and hostilities dev-

astated Afghanistan. Before launching of IS-Daaesh Afghanistan in 2014 and 2015, he had hoisted flags and started politico-religious activities. At that his family was residing in Peshawar and enjoying luxurious lives. He was the first who had established a 14-member Shura of IS-Daaesh soon after IS emergence in Syria and Osama Bin Laden demise. In connection with IS activities he had established FM Radio. The Radio was latest in its transmissions even from a running motor car from different areas. It was believed that Muslim Dost was getting maximum financial help from US and its other regional, European and Middle East allies. Muslim Dost remained one of top leaders of IS but in November 2019 he had made a deal with the Afghan government of Dr. Ashraf Ghani and was given accommodation in Kabul. His two sons were gifted admission in Jalalabad University. During the same period, the IS chief Aslam Farooqi was given accommo-

datation in Qandahar. However, after deadly terror attack against Hindu's worship place in Kabul, Aslam Farooqi was arrested in March-April and imprisoned in Kabul. Whereas Abdul Rahim developed understanding with Pakistan and he was shifted to Jalalabad. Little before Doha Peace agreement, Muslim Dost was again invited by Nabil ex National security advisor to Kabul to help deal with IS against Taliban. However such efforts ended without rendering any outcome. In fact, after November 2019, Abdul Rahim Dost lost his credentials in US corridors after his alleged links with Pakistan and Doha Qatar based Taliban political office and his differences also developed with the IS chief Dr. Shahab Al Mohajir also called as Ghaffari.

At once the IS was considered dangerous group in Eastern Afghanistan and had lost its influence in the wake of November 2019 joint military operations.

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Briefs

10 more patients of suicide blast discharged from LRH

PESHAWAR: The discharge of patients of Kocha Risaldar mosque blast continued from hospitals as 10 more patients were discharged from Lady Reading Hospital (LRH) after recovery. Muhammad Asim, Spokesman of LRH told APP on Monday that 10 more patients admitted in different wards have been discharged in last 12 hours after recovery. He said that 27 patients were currently under treatment including five in ICU. The spokesman thanked relatives of the blast victims for their cooperation with doctors and paramedics. The spokesman also appreciated doctors, paramedics, nurses and others staff of the hospitals for providing prompt treatment to the blast victims. — APP

LB elections in AJK to be held in July: AJK PM

MIRPUR (AJK): Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Sardar Abdul Qayyum Niazi while urging party workers to gear up for the upcoming local body elections said that it has been agreed in principle to hold the much-delayed polls in July this year. Prime Minister Niazi said this while addressing a reception hosted in his honour by Raja Qayyum at Manil Fagosh in Kotli city of Mirpur division. Presided over by Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Ali Muhammad Khan the ceremony was addressed by Zafar Iqbal Malik Minister for Higher Education, Chaudhry Muhammad Akhlaq Minister for Finance and Custodian, Dr. Nisar Ansar Abdali Minister for Public Health, Raja Mansoor Khan Secretary General Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Azad Kashmir and Raja Qayyum and others.

Speaking on the occasion the PM said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan Pakistan and Kashmir both were in strong hands. He said that a new era of progress and prosperity has begun in the liberated territory (AJK). "Mega development projects in different sectors have been initiated all across the region", he said adding that tunnels, highways, health care facilities were being constructed to improve the life standard of common man. He said that special focus was being given to promote tourism in the AJK. He said that the dream of making AJK a prosperous and self-sufficient state would be achieved soon. The PM also announced the reconditioning of Manil Fagosh Road and giving middle status to Primary Manil School. Voicing his concern over the opposition parties' hullabaloo, prime minister Niazi said that opposition parties must refrain from creating political instability in the country. — APP

Peshawar Metropolitan kicks off tree plantation

PESHAWAR: Director General (DG) of Capital Metropolitan Government Peshawar, Arshad Ali Zubair inaugurated a tree plantation campaign and planting a sapling here on Monday. A ceremony in this regard was held at the Capital Metropolitan Government Office where Assistant Director Admin Syed Qadeem Shah, Accounts Officer Muneeb-ur-Rehman and PSO Nusratullah besides other officials were present on the occasion. The DG said benefits of planting trees were not denied, adding, every citizen should plant at least one tree to eliminate environmental and air pollution to help promote a healthy environment in the country. "The more trees there are, the more oxygen there will be. So the weather will be good and there will be more rain, so for the better weather of the country, plant as many trees as possible," he added. — APP

People have endorsed PTI manifesto: Farrukh Habib

PM would not only complete his 5-year constitutional term but also get fresh mandate in the next elections for another five years

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: State Minister for Information & Broadcasting Farrukh Habib said on Sunday that people endorsed Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) manifesto by reposing confidence in the leadership of Imran Khan and anybody who would disregard this mandate would have to face people's wrath. Addressing a public gathering in Canal Burg Faisalabad, he said that Pakistan People's Party (PPP) failed to attract masses to their rally in Nasir Bagh Lahore. He said that the opposition was afraid to move "No confidence motion", adding, they (opposition) would have to face yet another shameful defeat in the parliament. He said that Prime Minister Imran Khan would emerge victorious in this move.



He said the PM would not only complete his 5-year constitutional term but also get fresh mandate in the next elections for another five years. He said that political heirs of the looters and plunderers were vying to win confidence of people in Punjab, adding the public had not rightly rejected them. Farrukh Habib said that PPP was ruling Sindh for the last 13 years but its inhabitants were kept deprived of basic health facilities. "They have to bring critical pa-

tients on donkey carts instead of ambulances. Similarly, vaccine for rabies is not available in Sindh and they are forced to use contaminated water. Sindh government is opposing a public welfare scheme of health card, only for its personal vendetta", he added.

He said that Zardaris and Sharifs greatly harmed the country, especially by keeping common man deprived and impoverished. They were not only involved in loot and plunder but they also brought disrepute to the state institutes. "They shifted their businesses and properties to other countries", adding they were raising hollow slogans of retrieving looted money from each other but have once again joined hands due to fear of accountability. "Prime Minister Imran Khan is an upright leader and he will not accept any pressure nor give them a clean hit,"

he added. He said that Sharifs and Zardaris belonged to elite class and preferred to proceed abroad for treatment of minor ailments and hence failed to establish any good hospital in the country.

On the other hand, Prime Minister Imran Khan introduced unmatched universal health insurance system to provide across the board health cover to 45 million families. "This facility is for every one irrespective of his affiliation with any political party. The card holder family can get best treatment from any hospital of their own choice up to Rs.1 million. It is one aspect of Riyasat-e-Madina for which Prime Minister Imran Khan is striving hard", he added.

He said that contrary to the previous rulers' favourite practice, Prime Minister Imran Khan did not purchase properties abroad

, rather he made sincere efforts to mobilise national resources towards welfare of the masses. He said that it was very strange that a newcomer like Bilawal Zardari was forcing people to accept him as a leader without any political struggle at his credit. "People are aware of the situation and would not allow him to treat them like their servants," he added.

He said that Bilawal was on the mission to save the corruption of Zardari, but they must realize that people rejected them and on the other hand the incumbent government would continue the accountability of looters and plunderers.

He said that as billions of rupees were found in the accounts of Maqsood peon the people had right to ask them about the legitimacy of that wealth.

Ministers, political leaders visit Kocha Risaldar

PESHAWAR: People from different walks of life including federal and provincial ministers, advisers and special assistants, leaders of political parties and civil society have visited Kocha Risaldar where they condoled with the bereaved families over the tragic death of their loved ones in the Friday's suicide blast. Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Pir Noorul Haq Qadri, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister for Interfaith Harmony, Hafiz Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, Jamiat Ulema Islam Chief Maulana Fazl ur Rehman, Awami National Party's provincial spokeswoman Samar Bilour and others visited Kocha Risaldar where they offered Fateha for the suicide blast victims.

While condemning the attack, they said the enemy of peace couldn't shake the moral, courage and determination of the nation through such coward act. They said the entire nation stands with victims families in this hour of grief and sorrow.

Tahir Ashrafi said that he had visited Kocha Risaldar on the directives of the Prime Minister to express his heartfelt condolences with the victims families. He said the government with cooperation of people would frustrate nefarious designs of enemy of peace and culprits involved in this inhuman attack would be dealt with an iron hands. Ashrafi appreciated the courage and steadfastness of the blast victims and assured full support to them. Earlier, the Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shah Farman, Chief Minister Mahmood Khan, Corps Commander Peshawar Lt Gen Faiz Hameed and others Provincial Ministers visited Kocha Risaldar and offered Fateha for eternal peace of the victims. — APP



Lala Musa: Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Chairman PPP along with senator Sherry Rehman and Qamar Zaman Kaira sitting on container during Awami Long March. — DNA

Quran Palace inaugurated in Jhelum

KAMRAN GUJJAR

JHELUM: The Quran palace was inaugurated by the Azmat Quran movement. This is the first Quran palace of Mandi Bahaudin district.

According to the details the opening ceremony for inauguration of the Quran Palace organized yesterday. Hakim Mushtaq Ahmed Naqshbandi, founder of the Azmat Quran movement inaugurated this.

A big rally took place in the city, led by general secretary Saghir Ahmed Naqshbandi and other members, at the opening ceremony, members of other districts also participated the ceremony. Hakim Mushtaq Ahmed Naqshbandi said that today we can achieve success in this world and in the hereafter only by following the commands of the Holy Quran.

AC Gujrat Umer Draz cracks down on price-hikers

YOOSUF BHUTTA

GUJRAT: Assistant Commissioner Gujrat Mr. Umer Draz Gondal cracks down on vendors selling expensive meat and other food items. The AC Gujrat checked the butchers selling expensive meat and other food vendors in Gujrat city and imposed heavy fines on them for violation. Three FIRs have been registered against the responsible traders. "Strict legal action will be taken against those who are responsible of creating artificial scarcity

of food items.", said AC. He urged the citizens to identify the culprits of food inflation so that strict action may be taken against them.

12 roads selected for beautification program Deputy Commissioner Dr. Khurram Shehzad said that 12 major highways have been selected for beautification of Gujrat City. He said, "The services of horticulture experts are also being sought during the implementation of the beautification program." DC was addressing a meeting of district officers under his chair held

in the committee room of DC office here the other day.

The meeting was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner General Mr. Afzal Hayat Tarar, Assistant Commissioner Mr. Umer Draz Gondal, District Forest Officer Mr. Rashid Bashir Chatha, and Secretary Road Transport Authority Miss Aqsa Riaz. He told that work will be started on Old GT Road, Kathala Chowk, Nayyar Mall Chowk, Small Industrial Estate Chowk, Gulzar-e-Madina Chowk, GTS Chowk in 11 km area from Bab-e-Gujrat to Rahmania Bridge.



JHELUM: Hakim Mushtaq Ahmed Naqshbandi, founder of the Azmat Quran movement inaugurating Quran palace. — DNA

Shibli Faraz urges need for efficient appliances in country

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Science and Technology, Senator Shibli Faraz Monday said the present government intends to harness power from renewable resources with the full participation of the private sector. He was speaking at the inauguration of a two-day international seminar on 'Sustainable Technologies in Modern Energy: A Roadmap Towards Green Economy' at the Pakistan Academy of Sciences. Shibli Faraz was of the view that small conservation from energy efficient appliances translate into savings on large energy projects. He called on adopting the approach of the Japanese with regard to conservation of energy and modernizing domestic appliances. The two-day seminar is being organized by the Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South (COMSATS) with funding of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and COMSATS' Centre of Excellence in Islamabad, the COMSATS University Islamabad (CUI). In his welcome address, Rector CUI,

Prof. Dr. Muhammad T. Afzal, offered his institution's support in setting up Pakistan's first Fuel Cell Research Institute to spearhead development of fuel cell technology under the government's knowledge economy initiative. He pointed out that more research and development was needed in smart grid technology to cut line losses and potentially drawing investors and modern distribution companies to invest in Pakistan. A smart grid, he said, can help reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 211 million metric tons and is much more reliable than a traditional grid. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Syed Junaid Akhlaq, Secretary General

PNCU, communicated UNESCO's gratitude to the partner organizations and informed that UNESCO is glad to support this important event being held under 'COMSATS-UNESCO South-South Regional Technical Cooperation Programme. Mr. Irfan Hayee, Deputy Director Programs, COMSATS Secretariat urged participants to deliberate on policy recommendations resulting from focused discussion at the seminar. During his virtual address, Prof. Dr. Ashraf Shalaa, Chairperson COMSATS Coordinating Council, lauded COMSATS and UNESCO for partnering on a highly relevant area of sustainable technologies in energy

in the developing world. He considered nations' abilities to keep up with technological progress and innovation critical for socio-economic growth. The event is catering to major themes of emerging green technologies for sustainable energy; Green ICTs for sustainable development; energy policy implications for sustainable energy growth and development and balance in energy mix. The topics discussed at the seminar pertained to Digital Engineering in Pakistan; Lithium-ion Batteries as Energy Storage Device; Indigenous Development of Hydropower; Renewable Energy-based Distributed Generation; Multifunctional Electrode Materials for Lithium-ion Battery and Super-Capacitors; Sustainable Technologies in Modern Energy; Solar Thermal Air Conditioning Technologies; Materials for Solar Energy and Hydrogen Production.

The seminar is expected to generate recommendations regarding consumption and distribution of sustainable energy technologies for the government in an expert panel discussion arranged on its second day. — APP

GCUF convocation on last week of March

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: Government College University Faisalabad (GCUF) will organize its annual convocation 2022 at new campus of the university here during last week of March 2022. A spokesman of the university said here on Monday that Governor Punjab/Chancellor GCUF would grace the occasion as Chief Guest whereas Vice Chancellor GCUF would preside over the event for which all arraignments are being finalized rapidly.

He said that during convocation, degrees and medals would be conferred to graduates passed out during sessions 2013-18, 2014-18, 2015-18, 2016-18, 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-19, 2020-20, 2021-20, 2022-20 and PhD scholars of 2019, 2020 and 2021 sessions.

He further said that full dress rehearsal of the students for participation in the convocation would be held one day before the convocation and for this purpose, the intending students have been directed to get them registered for participation in convocation at the earliest up to March 20 as limited number of gowns were available which would be provided on "first come, first served" basis.

More information in this regard can be obtained through telephone numbers 041-9201037, 041-9330894 and 041-9200895, he added.

SACM inaugurates BoK at Nowshera

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Special Assistant to the Chief Minister on Industries and Investment Abdul Karim Tordher Monday inaugurated the branch of Bank of Khyber at Nowshera economic zone. Secretary Industries, Commerce and Technical Education and Chairman BoD Zulfikar Ali Shah and CEO KPEZDMC Javed Iqbal Khattak, Group Head (Conventional) The Bank of Khyber Sher Muhammad, Vice Chairman KPBOIT Syed Mehmood, Chairperson ZFC Fayaz Bacha and Vice Chairperson ZFC Nowshera Irfan Khan were also present on the occasion.

SACM also inaugurated various industrial units there. The inauguration of the BoK branch at Nowshera Economic Zone is yet another milestone achieved by KPEZDMC paving the way for the local industrialist in terms of access to finance by the leading bank of the province within the zone. During the visit, SACM also inaugurated AM Industries Pvt Ltd, Al Habib Minerals PVT Ltd, and MM Industries Pvt Ltd.

These industrial projects worth Rs300 million will also generate more than 370 employment opportunities upon commercial production. SACM also visited A/M/S Aziz Oil and Ghee Industries at Export Processing Zone, Risalpur, where Vice Chairman KPBOIT Syed Mehmood briefed the Honorable SACM & CEO KPEZDMC about the Project. — APP

Kite factory unearthed, 60,000 kites seized

DNA

FAISALABAD: Madina Town police on Monday claimed to have unearthed a kite making factory and seized more than 60,000 kites. Police spokesman said that SHO Madina Town on a tip-off, conducted raid at a kite factory in Khayaban Colony Eden Garden where kites and its material were being prepared. The police arrested an accused Muhammad Arshad, resident of Lahore whereas his accomplice Muazzam Butt managed to escape from the scene. The police have seized more than 60,000 kites and its paraphernalia.

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0300 5428178

National Days and Armed Forces Days**MARCH**

March 01/ Bosnia	National Day
March 03/ Bulgaria	National Day
March 06/ Ghana	Independence Day
March 12/ Mauritius	National Day
March 17/ Ireland	St. Patrick's Day
March 20/ Tunisia	Independence Day
March 21/ Namibia	National Day
March 25/ Greece	National Day
March 26/ Bangladesh	National Day
March 27/ Myanmar	Armed Forces Day

**Hotels & Restaurants**

Serena Hotel.....	111 133 133
Marriott.....	051- 2826121
Monal.....	0334-5421812

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Turkish Airlines.....	8494949
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**Hospitals**

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Islamabad Metropolitan

Corporation.....	9209224
Potohar Town.....	9209224
Rawal Town.....	5773343

Water Tank

Islamabad.....	0321-5744480
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Business community urged to engage Africa

Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President, ICCI said that Africa was a huge market for Pakistan to enhance its exports, but it still remained untapped due to which our trade with Africa crossed just US\$ 4 billion in 2019-20

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Africa is the rising continent with over 1.2 billion consumer market and the Pakistani business community should focus on Niger to penetrate the African market for trade and exports. This was said by H.E. Ahmed Ali Sirohey, Pakistan's Ambassador to Niger during an interaction with the business community at Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry. The Ambassador said that Niger was a gateway between North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa and was keen to promote business relations with Pakistan. He stressed that the Pakistani private sector should explore Niger for business and investment opportunities in order to get better market access to African



countries. He assured that he would extend all possible cooperation to the businessmen in exploring Niger for business opportunities. Speaking at the occasion, Muhammad Shakeel Mu-

nir, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) said that Africa was a huge market for Pakistan to enhance its exports, but it still remained untapped due to which our

trade with Africa crossed just US\$ 4 billion in 2019-20. He said that the government has made a Look Africa policy that should help in boosting Pakistan's trade with the African region.

He said that ICCI would consider sending a delegation to African countries including Niger in order to explore new avenues of promoting trade and exports with this high potential mar-

ket. He hoped that Pakistan Embassy in Niger would fully cooperate with ICCI delegation to make its visit result-oriented. Muhammad Faheem Khan Vice President ICCI said that African region was a growing market for business and investment and urged that Pakistan should negotiate preferential trade agreements with Niger and other major countries of Africa that would help in boosting Pakistan's trade with this region and achieve beneficial results for our economy. Hamayun Kabir, Khalid Mehmood, Tauseef Zaman, Ashfaq Chatha, Khalid Chaudhry, Saeed Bhatti, Malik Mohsin Khalid, Kashif Chaudhry and others also spoke at the occasion and shared useful proposals for strengthening Pakistan's trade and economic relations with African region.

FS, German special envoy discuss Afghanistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Secretary Sohail Mahmood received Mr. Gasper Wieck, Germany's Special Representative. During the meeting, views were exchanged on Pakistan-Germany bilateral relations and the situation in Afghanistan. Extending a warm welcome, Foreign Secretary Sohail Mahmood shared Pakistan's perspective on a peaceful, stable and prosperous Afghanistan and highlighted Pakistan's efforts in this regard. The Foreign Secretary underlined that the international community's sustained engagement and continued assistance would help in addressing the urgent humanitarian and economic challenges in Afghanistan. The Foreign Secretary highlighted that Pakistan had extended full assistance in the evacuation of members of the international community, including diplomats and staff, representatives of international organizations, NGOs, media personnel and others from Afghanistan, since August 2021. He expressed the hope that the situation in Afghanistan would continue to stabilize, providing incentive to Afghan nationals to return to their homeland. Adding that in the interest of the long-term stability, the international community should consider measures beyond the provision of humanitarian assistance, the Foreign Secretary remarked that a stable Afghanistan would contribute immensely towards economic stability, regional connectivity, and counter-terrorism in the country. In the bilateral context, the Foreign Secretary noted that the two countries had celebrated the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations last year. He added that Pakistan and Germany enjoyed close cooperation in diverse fields and bilateral collaboration was expanding in new areas including energy and climate. The Foreign Secretary expressed the hope that the two sides would continue to maintain regular exchange of high-level visits. Special Representative Wieck thanked for Pakistan's supportive role in facilitating the evacuation efforts and concurred on the need to stay engaged with Afghanistan to promote the objectives of peace and stability. He expressed satisfaction on the bilateral exchanges and reaffirmed Germany's commitment to enhance mutual cooperation in all areas of common interest.

USA, China and UK top 3 destinations of Pakistani exports

ISLAMABAD: The United States remained the top export destinations of Pakistani products during the first seven months of financial year (2021-22), followed by China and UK. Total exports to the USA during July-January (2021-22) were recorded at US \$3862.642m against the exports of US \$2677.208m during July-January (2020-21), showing growth of 44.27 percent, according to SBP. This was followed by China, wherein Pakistan exported goods worth \$1588.763m against the exports of \$1026.951m last year, showing increase of 54.70 percent. UK was the at third top export destination, where Pakistan exported products worth \$1309.387m during the months under review against the exports of \$1135.318m, showing growth of 15.33 percent, SBP data revealed. Among other countries, Pakistani exports to UAE stood at \$996.563m against \$823.631m during last year, showing an increase of 20.99 percent while the exports to Germany were recorded at \$992.237m against \$873.259m last year, the data said. - DNA



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Secretary Sohail Mahmood exchanging views Gasper Wieck, Germany's Special Representative. - DNA

"Role of Women in socio-economic development"

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Strategic Perspectives (CSP) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) organised a Round table titled, "Role of Women in Socio-Economic Development of Pakistan," on March 7, 2022. The event was part of the International Women Day celebration. Ambassador Seema Ilahi Baloch, Pakistan's Former Ambassador to Sri Lanka and Poland was the Keynote Speaker for the event. Other discussants included: Ms Aliya Amirali, Lecturer Qaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad; Ms Sadaf Dar, Officer Gender and Development, RSPN; Ms Jubilee Hunzai, member, Civil Society, Pakistan; and Ms Misbah Mukhtar, Research Associate, ISSI. In her introductory remarks Dr Neelum Nigar, Director, CSP, welcomed the guests and said that women have a big role to play in the socio-economic development of Pakistan and for that they need to be provided a conducive environment and opportunities. - DNA

PM Imran Khan is popular political leader: Asad Umar

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Asad Umar on Sunday said Prime Minister Imran Khan is a popular political leader and can address the political gatherings. Talking to a private news channel, he said the prime minister would attend more political gatherings including Dir, Hafizabad and Sukkur before the Holy month of Ramadan. He said PM speaks truth regarding European Union about the situation of Occupied Kashmir, adding

the Indian armed forces were busy in brutalities and atrocities against the innocent people of the occupied valley. The minister said Pakistan has an independent foreign policy thus no body can dictate the country. Asad Umar said almost all political parties were in the election mode because 2023 was not so far away, adding leaving and joining the political parties was the part of politics. Replying to a question, he said all the political allied parties were fully intact with the govern-

ment and many parliamentarians of the opposition side were ready to join the treasury benches. He said the opposition itself confused about presenting of no confidence motion against the government as the today's statement of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari was the ample proof in that regard. He said Jahangir Tareen is still part of the government and he never given anti government statement till date and not a single member from the treasury benches has given any statement against him.

Bringing women in mainstream very important: Speakers

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani women are over half of the country's total population so bringing them in the mainstream is very important to tap the actual economic potential of the country. Addressing "Aurat Azadi Jalsa" speakers on Sunday, Nayab Ali Tarmsgender Rights Activist said that today's event aimed to pay a tribute to the heroism of all women and others who continued struggle for democratic and progressive society. She said government should adopt financially inclusive policies for women to improve their economic empowerment. She said that the aim to celebrate the event was to highlight the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. She said that women day annually marked on March 8, for highlighting the importance of the day and accelerating gender parity. Human rights activist and Journalist Fauzia Shahid said that majority of the women, transgender persons, persons living with disabilities, peasants, workers and minorities will participate in Aurat March. - APP

NHMP to ensure best upgradation work: IG

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) Inam Ghani said that NHMP would ensure best quality upgradation work in its beat offices and residential quarters for better services to the officers. During visit to NH&MP Lines Headquarter Motorway M-2 and Beat 6 at Chakri, he said they had an excellent plan to improve both the beat sector offices and residential barracks, moreover driving training facility for the officers would also start very soon. In a statement issued here, he said that DIG/ Zonal Commander must personally oversee that every rupee was very well spent. Inspector General also visited NH&MP Lines Headquarter Motorway M-2 and Beat 6 at Chakri and Motorway North Beat 7 Kalkarkahar to inspect the improvement work in the beat offices and residential quarters.

NCSW condemns killing of infant girl

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) Nilofar Bakhtiar Monday condemned the killing of 7-days old girl by her father in Mianwali. In a shocking news today, a fanatic father in Mianwali city brutally shot and murdered his 7 days old newborn baby girl because he wanted a boy, said a press release issued here. Chairperson NCSW Nilofar Bakhtiar strongly condemned the incident and expressed her deepest condolences to the family. On the occasion, Nilofar Bakhtiar said, "I am in a complete shock that such individuals still exist amongst us. NCSW will go to every length to get this barbaric man arrested. We are in contact with DPO Mianwali and will provide every support for the arrest of the man." Nilofar further reiterated that human rights, especially women rights need to be safeguarded in our country. - APP

Govt to mainstream women with equal rights, says Moonis

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Water Resources Moonis Elahi on Monday said that the present government under the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan was determined to take women into mainstream and provide equal opportunities in practical life. In his message on the occasion of International Women's Day, he said that women were approximately 50 per cent of the country's total population. Elahi said the role of women in practical life for the socio-economic development of the country could not be neglected. He regretted that the previous governments did not take any positive step to include women in the national mainstream. "Allah Almighty has given respect to woman by making her custodian of beautiful relationships like mother, daughter, sister and wife", he said. The International Women's Day is celebrated every year to make the masses particularly males to consider females as equal members of the society. - APP

Ch. Fawad grieved over Rafiq Tarar's demise

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain on Monday expressed deep grief over the death of former president Rafiq Tarar. In a condolence message he said he was saddened to hear the news of former president of Pakistan's demise. He prayed for the rest of the departed soul in eternal peace and grant of courage to the bereaved family to bear this loss with fortitude. - APP

ANF, Roots sign MoU to eradicate drugs

Ammar Ali, Force Commander ANF Regional Directorate North signed the MOU from ANF and CEO Roots International Schools & Colleges Mr. WalidMuhstaq signed the MOU from RISC

DNA

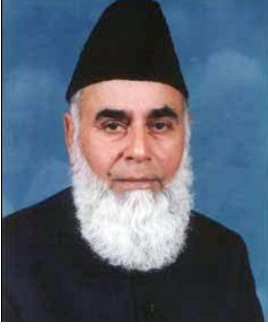
ISLAMABAD: Roots International Schools & Colleges & ANF Regional Directorate North and signed MOU on Monday, 7th March, 2022 with the aim to work together towards eradication of drug abuse in general, while ensuring that our educational institutions and our youth are provided with a drug free environment. Brig. Ammar Ali, Force Commander ANF Regional Directorate North signed the MOU from ANF and CEO Roots International Schools & Colleges Mr. WalidMuhstaq signed the MOU from RISC. Force Commander ANF Regional Directorate North added that ANF has launched a Nation Wide "Anti-Drug Awareness Campaigns" in various cities, with special focus on the Educational Institutions and highlight that no



single individual and organization can fight against drugs independently: it's a joint and shared responsibility. The purpose of signing this MOU is to contribute to certain the Drug-Free Society and Say No To Drugs through Drug Demand Reduction and Supply in education institutions through intensive awareness sessions and prevention programs. ANF agreed to facilitate RISC students for capacity building and personality grooming under ANF Youth Ambassadorship and Internship Program. CEO RISC Mr. Walid Mushtaq heartedly thanked all the ANF Team and coordinators for giving great opportunities to students of RISC and also ensuring that RISC is standing with ANF for any support and cooperation. Brig. Ammar said that RISC has thousands of young students who could raise voices nationwide against drugs and can play a positive and vital role in society.

Briefs

Air Chief condoles death of Rafiq Tarar



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff Pakistan Air Force expresses heartfelt condolences on the sad demise of former President of Pakistan and Supreme Court Justice Mr Muhammad Rafiq Tarar. "May Allah bless the departed soul; and give strength to the bereaved family to bear this irreparable loss, Ameen!"

AIOU uploads merit lists of M Phil, PhD

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has uploaded merit lists of M Phil and/or PhD programs, offered in semester spring 2022, on its website (www.aiou.edu.pk) including Distance and Non Formal Education, Islamic Studies, Economics, Iqbal Studies, History, Urdu, Sharia as well as BS/MS in Mathematics. Selected candidates have also been informed to deposit fee via SMS and postal services. Transparency has been ensured throughout the process upon the special directives of Prof Dr Zia Ulm-Qayyum, VC, AIOU said Syed Zia UHusnain, Director, Admissions, AIOU in a statement. He, further, added that the candidates may contact the university either through the telephone number 051-9057422 or 051-9250043 or by sending an email at adms.pg@aiou.edu.pk for any further information. Merit lists for the remaining programs will be uploaded by the end of this week. - APP

Simulation lab to be set at RMU

RAWALPINDI: Vice-Chancellor (VC) Rawalpindi Medical University (RMU) Dr Muhammad Umer Monday said that a state of the art simulation laboratory would be set up at the cost of Rs 550 million to perform complex minimally invasive surgical procedures before practicing them on patients. The VC told APP that the lab would be established at RMU to improve the slight intrusive surgery skills. He informed that the simulation lab was designed to provide immersive learning experiences for healthcare practitioners and students. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary secretary Kanwal Shauzab, ambassador of Bulgaria Irena Gancheva, CEO Roots International Scholls and College Walid Mushtaq along with others cutting cake during a ceremony of celebrating 'International Womens Day'. - DNA

FJWU organises 19th convocation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The 19th Convocation of Fatima Jinnah Women University (FJWU), Rawalpindi was held here on Monday at Jinnah Convention Center, to commemorate the outstanding academic accomplishments of its students for the years 2019-2021. The Emeritus Professor, Dr. Samina Amin Qadir was the guest of honor at the event. Total 3398 degrees were conferred to the students including 26 PhD, 356 MS and M. Phil, 688 Masters and 2332 Bachelors' degrees. Over 109 gold and 87 silver medals were also awarded to the students having distinction in their respective degree programs. The sponsored gold medals and shields were also awarded by 'First Women Bank Limited', Bank of Punjab, 'Media Development Trust Mishaal Pakistan', USAID, 'Sustainable Social Development Organization' (SSDO), 'Dr. Saeeda Asadullah Khan Scholarship' and 'Qudratullah Shahab Gold Medal'. While addressing the participants, the Vice Chancellor, FJWU Dr. Saima Hamid expressed her gratitude to the guest of honor and congratulated the students and their parents, and wished them a prosperous future who had been equipped with productive, creative and inventive professional skill sets. She appreciated the outstanding achievements of the students and their hard work despite COVID-19 challenges.

Almost half population received relief under Ehsaas

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection, Senator Dr. Samia Nishtar Monday said Ehsaas program being the largest social protection intervention in the country's history has provided cash relief to half of the country's population during the last three years. She was speaking at the event on three years completion of Ehsaas program held here. The event was chaired by Prime Minister, Imran Khan. Reflecting on the program progress, Dr. Samia said, "Through Ehsaas, we are reaching out to 14 different disadvantaged groups particularly women and girls. We have institutionalized integrity frameworks, and data and technology driven systems to ensure transparency. In three years, Ehsaas provided cash to half the country's population". She continued, "Despite COVID-19, we have accomplished Ehsaas survey which is South Asia's first digital census of national scale." "This was due to these foundations, she highlighted, that Ehsaas delivered all projects faster than private sector in just three years. - APP

Economic empowerment vital for women's emancipation

President Alvi said with the example of Hazrat Khadija, the wife of Prophet Muhammad's (Peace be upon Him) as a businesswoman, there was no bar on the women including in Pakistan to indulge in entrepreneurship

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Monday terming economic empowerment a major contributory factor in women's emancipation said huge responsibility lay on the society to help women thrive in their fields by ensuring them a safe environment. Addressing here at an event in connection with International Women's Day, the president said both Islam and the Constitution of Pakistan provided equal rights to women and allowed their participation in professional and social domains. Begum

Samina Alvi also attended the event themed 'Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow', which was jointly organized by United Nations Women, UN Population Fund, European Union, UK Aid and the government of Canada. President Alvi said with the example of Hazrat Khadija, the wife of Prophet Muhammad's (Peace be upon Him) as a businesswoman, there was no bar on the women including in Pakistan to indulge in entrepreneurship. He called upon women entrepreneurs in the country to benefit from the modern information technology and explore the global markets.



He, however, stressed the need for ensuring freedom to women at public spaces so as to help them perform their duties comfortably and without any stress of social pressures. The president expressed satisfaction over the steps taken by the government for emancipation of women including programmes for financial and digital empowerment, amendments in property rights law and strong legislative framework regarding the incidents of rape and acid crimes. He mentioned

that banks at present were offering loans especially to women to help them become financially self-reliant. To control the cases of harassment and exploitation, he said instant verdict by the courts was crucial to avert nonappearance and reluctance of witnesses, which ultimately benefited the culprit. President Alvi said Quaide-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah was a great supporter of women's rights and always favoured their inclusion in national mainstream being the representative of half of the population. Federal Minister for Human Rights Dr Shireen

Mazari said Women's Day was the time to celebrate womanhood, mark their progress and realize their challenges. She said the women in Pakistan were progressing, may it fighter pilots or musicians, who made mark in their respective fields. Dr Mazari stressed that society needed to give breathing space to women and also allow them to raise voice for themselves, whether through the platforms of Aurat March or Hijab March. She mentioned that her ministry had broadened the scope of harassment law especially by defining the definition of workplace.

Azam Khan Swati vows to uplift Pakistan Railways

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Azam Khan Swati, on Monday, said that he and his team was fully determined to take Pakistan Railways to new heights of glory as billions of rupees would be generated from branding of trains. Speaking at the inauguration ceremony of train branding here, followed by a press conference, the Minister said that railways and the corporate sector entered into a collaboration based on a transparent and win-win situation. Swati said that a branding policy based on security and longevity, as required by every businessperson or investor, would soon be


approved under his own supervision. He said that without the cooperation of corporate sector, it would be impossible to make Pakistan Railways a profitable entity. The minister assured the corporate community that the present contracts would not be affected from any policy changes of the future governments. Swati said that they were striving hard to utilize the dormant resources for the uplift and betterment of Pakistan Railways and said that railways were the key to economic development. He also said that it was equally important to prevent leakages due to corruption. He said that his

government had made the railways police independent so that they could perform their duties without any political pressure or hindrance. This would also help prevent theft of railways scrap which was going on for the past 70 years, he added. He said that independent Railways Police would also be able to apprehend the black sheep within the railways department without having to fear any backlash. He said that despite the fact that he had been in the seat for only one year and three months, his performance would speak when the Profit and Loss Account of Pakistan Rail-


ways would appear before the public on the 30th of June that year (2022). He even said that despite very limited resources he and his team would not only bring the railway out of deficit but would soon make it a profitable entity. The minister claimed that he would have surpassed India's former Railways Minister Lalu Prasad if only he had the resources. Swati said that the fares and freight charges would also be reduced once the railways started making increased profit. He also expressed hope to start soon the passenger train connecting Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul-Moscow and Central Asia. - APP

CDA to develop another park at D-12/2

ISLAMABAD: Capital Development Authority (CDA) will develop another park at sub-sector D-12/2 to provide maximum recreational spots to the people of area. The authority has allocated Rs9 million for the purpose whereas tender would be floated in newspapers in the coming weeks, CDA spokesman said on Monday. Talking to media, he said more parks were being developed in different sectors on direction of CDA Chairman Amer Ahmed Ali, who had been very keen in development and beautification of the city since taking the charge of civic agency. Under the project, he said other facilities including swings, walkways, jogging track, cycling track for children would be constructed. In addition, benches, proper lighting, security and other necessary arrangements would be ensured for the citizens, he added. The construction of jogging and cycle tracks, he said would provide the residents with an opportunity to enjoy some refreshing moments right at the bottom of the Margallah Hills. The spokesman added that the federal apex agency had completely developed as many as five small parks in multiple sub-sectors of D-12 and one big park in its Markaz. He said 100 per cent civic work at the parks had been completed which included fencing, and installation of new swings, kerbstones, jogging tracks, benches, playing gadgets for kids and others. To a query, he said three parks were being developed in sector I-14, whereas one at sector I-16. - DNA



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PM's remarks about EU envoy's letter

THE Prime Minister Imran Khan, while addressing a public rally in Vehari the other day, particularly mentioned the European Union envoys letter in which they had asked Pakistan to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Prime Minister Imran Khan asked the bloc where they were when India broke the international law in Kashmir. He said that Pakistan had helped the Western bloc in the war on terror. He added that he would not have made Pakistan a party to the war had been in government. Prime Minister's tirade against the European Union ambassadors and the EU envoys letter ostensibly do not augur well for the future wellbeing of relations between the two old and trusted partners.

In the first place, the EU envoys should have avoided the letter keeping in view the fact that black and white communication has more dangerous effects than the verbal one. The European Union ambassadors would have met with the Foreign Minister and conveyed to him their apprehensions verbally. Or, they would have sought a meeting with the Prime Minister in order to share with him the feelings of the European community. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesman during his weekly press briefing last Thursday categorically rejected the EU envoys contention saying their letter was absolutely unnecessary. The Spokesman particularly mentioned Danish Ambassador to Pakistan Lise Rosenholm, who according to him, acted in an 'irresponsible' manner by writing a Tweet in which she had asked Pakistan to condemn the Russian invasion. Realistically speaking, MOFA statement about the so-called letter was enough since the message was conveyed and there was a sort of realization among the diplomatic community that a course other than the letter would have been a better option. While the friction was about to die down, then came the statement of the prime minister. Many analysts believe the statement could have been avoided because it only added fuel to the fire. A physical meeting between the prime minister and the EU ambassadors would have been a plausible move. On the Ukraine issue for sure Pakistan is taking too long to come up with a clear stand. Just yesterday the prime minister said that they do not favour war therefore do not support either Russia or Ukraine. The MOFA needs to take a clear stand in this regard before it gets too late. A hotchpotch approach would not serve anybody's purpose.

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Turkey's diplomacy

THE foreign ministers of Ukraine, Russia and Turkey will meet in southern Turkey on Thursday, as the war in Ukraine has intensified.

Turkey has sought to mediate between Russia and Ukraine and offered on several occasions to host talks. "God willing, we will hold this meeting at a trilateral format in Antalya on Thursday" on the sidelines of a diplomatic forum in Turkey, Cavusoglu said Monday.

The announcement of the meeting comes after President Recep Tayyip Erdogan held phone talks with his Russian and Ukrainian counterparts. Turkey is a member of NATO and an ally of Ukraine. But it seeks to maintain good relations with Russia, on which it depends heavily for imports.

In recent times, Turkey has announced itself a major player in international diplomacy. Being a member of NATO, it is a welcome move by Turkey to bring both the parties together on a negotiations table. This war could lead to far more out-reaching consequences than it has now. Till now, there have been two rounds of talks between Ukrainian and Russian delegations. Last week, Ukraine said a second round of ceasefire talks with Russia has not yielded the results it hoped for, but the two sides have discussed humanitarian corridors and agreed to speak again. Ukraine's President said he was willing to have direct talks with Russia's Vladimir Putin to pursue peace.

The second round of face-to-face discussions took place on the Belarus-Poland border after initial talks ended without agreement.

The third round of peace talks between negotiators from Ukraine and Russia was to be held on Monday, a member of the Ukrainian delegation said. The talks come at a time when the war is getting intensified. At least 364 civilians are confirmed to have been killed in Ukraine since Russian troops invaded on Feb. 24, and another 759 wounded, although the true numbers are probably "considerably higher", a U.N. monitoring mission said on Sunday.

The updated figures, relating to casualties through March 5, added a further 13 deaths and 52 injuries to the casualties that the monitors from the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reported on Saturday.

This is an alarming figure, with reports also coming in of hospitals being attacked. Following Turkey's lead, the west must play a productive role rather than a provocative one, and try to settle this down with talks.

Rise of Western mercenaries

Dr M Ali Hamza



Around 16,000 foreign mercenaries are expected to arrive in Ukraine, and are offered \$2,000 a day to fight Putin

SPOKESPERSON of Russian defense ministry Igor Konashenkov briefed lately that mercenaries are under recruitment by the West to raid Russia's military convoy, attack aviation, using US Javelin and UK NLOW anti-tank missiles, man-portable air-defense system Stinger, and other weapons, supplied by the West. Moreover US intelligence launched a mass campaign to recruit more mercenaries, for instance Great Britain, Denmark, Latvia, Poland, and Croatia legally authorized their citizens to take part in the conflict, while France plans to send ethnic Ukrainians. There also are reports out of Senegal, where the Senegalese government lodged a note of protest to the Ukrainian embassy, against its mercenary recruitment campaign in Senegal.

Around 16,000 foreign mercenaries are expected to arrive in Ukraine, and are offered \$2,000 a day to fight Putin; though the risk is there but \$60, 000 a month is still good money. Claim by the Moscow cannot be taken as a flat lie, because recent history is evident that West developed and deployed mercenaries to push New World Order. Some of these mercenaries turned into a global threat as organized militant groups; example of Al-Qa-

eda and ISIS fits best in this scenario. But instead of discussing the list of mercenaries that turned into terrorist groups, let's have some analysis of last few decades to understand how US lead western hemisphere normalized the use of mercenaries and that rationalizes the recent claim from the Kremlin. The concept of mercenaries has always been there in covert wars. Mercenaries are also known as hired gun, shadow soldiers or a soldier of fortune. These are the individuals who are an outsider to the conflict, not a member of any official military and take part in military conflict for personal reasons. Reasons vary; it could be emotional, religious, ethnic, humanitarian or financial, depending on who is using them, and how are they used. Whatever the reason a mercenary or his clan fights for, the Geneva Conventions declare that mercenaries are not recognized as legitimate combatants and do not have to be granted the same legal protections as captured service personnel of a regular army, means no prisoner-of-war status. UN Mercenary Convention of 1989 that came into force in 2001, its article 1.2 broadens the definition to include a non-national recruited to overthrow a "Government or otherwise undermining the constitutional order of a State; or undermine the territorial integrity of a State". In basic terms, all UN members agree that mercenaries should not be engaged, either to topple any government or to participate in any bilateral conflict.

Though UN laws and declarations exist but appear to be dysfunctional, because the market for illicit force has grown and has diversified in recent years. Industry of hired guns was catalyzed by wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, because the US hired thousands of armed civilians to conduct defensive military operations like convoy, personnel, and compound security. Many of them were not even Americans. According to a bipartisan commission report released to the US Congress in February 2011, the heavy reliance on private security companies in current contingency operations, begun during the Bush Administration, and surged under President Barack Obama.

Once the US left Iraq and Afghanistan, the mercenary labor pool they created began

looking for new clientele. Some ended up in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and Libya, and offering progressively lethal services. Thus American wars normalized mercenary use. Washington ignored the Geneva Convention and instead referred to mercenaries using vague terminology: private military companies, private security companies, private military security companies, defense contractors and contingency contractors. Such deceptive words cannot erase the historical account of last few decades that US invested on mercenaries. During World War II, about 10 percent of America's armed forces were contracted, but during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, that proportion reached to 50 percent. This swelling of numbers signals that US has no respect for UN conventions and considers the use of mercenaries as no illicit act. Additionally, the United Nations, EU, and international community did nothing serious about the problem effectively. So when a superpower uses mercenaries and gets away with it, then everyone can do the same. The American precedent unleashed the market for force, even a new dimension of cyber-mercenaries called "hack back" been added. Private force has become big business, and global in scope. No one truly knows how many billions of dollars are involved around this illicit market. All we know is that business is booming and credit goes to none, but the US. Washington's reliance on mercenaries to fight its wars has transformed into a strategic vulnerability, not just for US but for the globe.

Moreover, in 2021, German authorities arrested the two ringleaders, who wanted to recruit up to 150 men and offered \$10,000 a week to join their private army. They possessed a horde of weapons and nuclear waste. The plan: Go to Yemen, kill Houthis, and bill the Saudis; another example from the West. So the Kremlin's claim is substantiated and makes it easy to trust the reliability of their intelligence reports. Are we going to witness the making of another Al-Qaeda? But this time the title would have the tint of western language instead of Arabic, because this time religion is not going to be the tool to fool, but the card will be "Eine humanitäre Krise" or "a humanitarian crisis".

Russian societal tensions

James Dorsey

"The church is closely tied to the current government. There is mounting hostility to its ruling class because of its ostentatious consumption, luxury, power, and repression. People feel that the church has become obsessed with earthly goods. This is risky because sooner or later, power will change hands," said a Russian political scientist in an email exchange

THE Russian Orthodox Church blesses rather than fires weapons. In doing so, it has emerged as a powerful weapon in its own right in President Vladimir Putin's civilizationalist arsenal.

Mr. Putin justified his 12-day-old invasion of Ukraine in part by asserting that President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's government had been preparing for the "destruction" of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Mr. Putin was referring to that part of the church that remained loyal to the Moscow Patriarch after the Ukrainian church in 2018 declared itself independent. Unwittingly, Mr. Putin may have been acknowledging that all may not be well in the church, at least from not from his perspective. Choosing his words carefully, Metropolitan Onufry, the head of the pro-Moscow wing of the church, called for an end to the fighting.

"Forget mutual quarrels and misunderstandings and... unite with love for God and our Motherland," Mr. Onufry said. The Metropolitan's call contrasted starkly with maximalist remarks by the Moscow church's patriarch, Archbishop Kirill, a staunch supporter of Mr. Putin. "When I say 'Russian,' I use the ancient expression from 'A Tale of Bygone Years - Where from has the Russian land come,' the land which now includes Russia and Ukraine and Belarus and other tribes and peoples," the patriarch said.

In his war, Mr. Putin's notion of religious fault lines amounts to drawing a landscape in which much of the terrain is covered and out of sight. Mr. Putin would have less of a problem with the repression becoming known of the pro-Kyiv wing of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in areas of Ukraine that Russia controls, including Crimea and the breakaway republics of Donetsk and Luhansk.

More problematic is the harassment and intimidation of the rapidly growing Evangelist community. If widely known in powerful Evangelist communities in the United States, it could undermine empathy for Mr. Putin as a conservative defender of family and traditional values.

"Moscow sees religion as a key front in the battle to control both Crimea and Donbas and to project influence into the rest of Ukraine," said John

E. Herbst, a former US ambassador to Ukraine.

Similarly, largely unnoticed in the discussion about Ukraine are demographic concerns among Russian nationalists and the Orthodox church. Demographers predict that with birth rates declining among ethnic Russians and increasing among Muslims, Islam is on track to account for one-third of Russia's population by 2050.

"There won't be any Russians left in 2050," warned Dimitri Smirnov, chairman of the church's Patriarchal Commission on Family, Maternity and Childhood Protection. Asked by Govorit Moskva radio what the church could do to reverse the trend, Mr. Smirnov replied: "It's too late."

That may have been an exaggeration by the church's elite who enjoy many of the perks of being in Mr. Putin's circle, including feeding off the gray train of hundreds of millions of dollars in state funds that have been designated for the restoration and maintenance of church properties and social work.

However, opposition to the church's course has been building among its rank and file, many of whom do not enjoy the leadership's perks. Lower-ranking priests have criticised prescribed sermons that warn against the perils of democracy, glorify Mr. Putin for restoring Russian pride, project Russian intervention in Syria as a mission to save Christians, and support Russian occupation of Ukrainian and Georgian lands. Last week, 150 Russian Orthodox clerics called for an end to the war in an open letter.

"The church is closely tied to the current government. There is mounting hostility to its ruling class because of its ostentatious consumption, luxury, power, and repression. People feel that the church has become obsessed with earthly goods. This is risky because sooner or later, power will change hands," said a Russian political scientist in an email exchange.

Risky as it may be, many in the Balkans fear that the church could help make Bosnia Herzegovina one of Mr. Putin's next targets should he subdue and maintain control of Ukraine.

"Russia sees the Balkans as NATO's soft underbelly where they can foment chaos and create a mess," said Bosnian journalist and scholar Harun Karcic. Noting that church support was a prerequisite for electoral success in countries like Serbia, Greece, Montenegro, and Macedonia, Mr. Karcic asserted that "whatever happens in Ukraine will not stop in Ukraine. Bosnia will likely be one of the next countries of interest."

The journalist-scholar described Milorad Dodik, the Serb member of the tripartite Bosnian presidency, as "a major Russian player who is a great supporter of the Russian Orthodox Church... Here we have a full Russian proxy who is a very public fan of the Russian Orthodox Church who effectively controls half of Bosnia."

Last year, Mr. Dodik put Bosnia on tenterhooks, pulling Republika Srpska, the Serb constituent element of the country, out of key government institutions, including the military, the judiciary, and the tax administration. The move threatens to destabilize Bosnia, almost three decades after it was founded on the ashes of a bitter ethnic and sectarian war.

Mr. Dodik is in good company. Serbia itself has emerged as a potential monkey wrench in the Balkans by breaking with Europe and refusing to close its air space to Russian flights. Moreover, Air Serbia has doubled to 15 from seven the number of weekly flights it operates from Belgrade to Russia.

We must prepare for vaccine-proof coronavirus variant

William A. Haseltine

Studies show that the strength of our long-lived T-cell response to SARS-CoV-2 proteins – especially by T cells that recognize the virus spike protein – strongly correlates with the degree of protection

IT is now well known that SARS-CoV-2, the strain of coronavirus that causes COVID-19, can mutate to evade vaccine protection against infection. The omicron variants – BA.1, B.1.1 and BA.2 – can infect those who were previously infected by other variants, even when vaccinated. And though a third booster shot offers some protection from an omicron infection, it wanes after three or four months, leaving most people susceptible to reinfection. That said, the immunity conveyed by prior infection or vaccination still dramatically reduces the incidence of hospitalization and death.

We have also come to realize that our main saviors against COVID-19 turn out not to be antibodies, but rather another part of the immune system: Our T cells. Studies show that the strength of our long-lived T-cell response to SARS-CoV-2 proteins – especially by T

cells that recognize the virus spike protein – strongly correlates with the degree of protection. There are two types of T cells, CD4+ and CD8+, which are distinguished by proteins on their surface. Because CD4+ T cells mostly assist in the production of antibodies, the CD8+ T cells are the real heroes of the story. Once they identify an invader they remember from a previous encounter, they act quickly to move in for the kill, demolishing infected cells and cutting short the life cycle of the virus.

Until omicron, the differences in neutralization by vaccine-induced antibodies and by monoclonal antibodies were relatively minor. But the process by which T cells recognize viral proteins is very different from that of antibodies, which recognize structures on the intact viral protein. We know that these critical structures, particularly those of the exterior spike protein, differ from variant to variant. It is precisely this structural diversity that allows the virus to evade most antibodies made in response to natural infection and vaccination. By contrast, our T cells do not recognize intact proteins. Rather, T-cell recognition occurs when a viral protein within a cell is chopped into short segments and cradled in the grip of a cellular protein called MHC type 1. MHC type 1 presents the viral fragment to the T cell at the cell surface, where the T cell can recognize the combination of the viral fragment presented by the MHC type 1 protein.

The authors thus speculate that CD8+ T cells' inability to respond to omicron may be due to a lack of recognition of the mutated peptides. Indeed, their theoretical calcula-

tions are consistent with the hypothesis that changes in the amino acid sequence of the omicron spike protein underlie the observed blind spots in T-cell recognition. Inherited differences in the ability to recognize specific protein fragments likely account for some people's failure to mount anti-omicron defenses. The authors have conjectured that "it is possible that these individuals will have reduced protection against severe disease." One sobering conclusion, then, is that omicron has drifted so far from the original strain that the 20 percent cohort in the study may not be fully protected either from infection or from hospitalization and death. However, after finding that a third vaccine dose increases T-cell responses by twentyfold or more, even for those who respond poorly, Gaiha has a more optimistic take. "While the omicron spike protein was able to escape T cells in a subset of individuals," he told me, "what we learned is that this deficiency in T-cell recognition can be overcome by booster vaccination. In addition, we found that non-spike proteins could be attractive targets for second-generation vaccines to protect against future SARS-CoV-2 evolution." Gaiha espouses the optimistic interpretation. But omicron is a warning that future SARS-CoV-2 variants may escape protection from both antibodies and T-cell immunity. We cannot predict that a variant that evades vaccines' ability to protect against infection and serious illness will arise, but we must be prepared for such a threat, lest we remain unguarded against it.

— Courtesy: Arab News

Briefs

IS presence
may cause...

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At that time, around three thousands IS fighters were arrested by joint forces whereas others, mostly from Uzbekistan and other Central Asian countries, slipped into Northern Afghanistan. And these people played a key role in falling of these areas to Taliban with starting evacuation of US troops from Afghanistan in May 2021 last.

Daesh setback

Though the Taliban rulers have initiated a "declared crackdown" against the IS militants soon after capturing power corridors in Kabul on August 15th 2021, in fact, it's bad days started with commencing of US led allied troops, Afghan government and Taliban joint operation in four districts of Nangarhar in October-November 2019 last. Over three thousands were arrested and thousands of others pushed towards Northern parts of Afghanistan. Likewise, it's almost top leaders and commanders have been targeted by US drones.

And the IS also lost some of financial aid from external friends. Now there are reports about over two thousands IS fighters' arrest by Taliban while almost all of its militants from CAR, have been scattered in Northern Afghanistan. But despite such losses, the IS is still considered as a serious threat to Taliban regime. And the Afghans are apprehending another era of bloodshed in the country owing to increased level of hostilities between Taliban and Daesh.

Opposition's
no-trust...

FROM PAGE 01

notion of any internal rift in the PTI, he said the politics within a political party was a routine matter. Some members of the Parliament had affinity Jahangir Khan Tareen and Aleem Khan, who themselves were not only the integral part of PTI, but also very close to Prime Minister Imran Khan. The minister said the core committee meeting took stock of the current political situation and implementation of the National Action Plan. It was briefed on the recent terror incident at a mosque in Peshawar. He lauded the armed forces for identifying and tracing the accused involved in the terror incident.

Foreign
forces want...

FROM PAGE 01

forces wanted destabilization in Pakistan. Addressing a press conference, he said a big group of terrorists has been identified by KPK police. Prime Minister Imran Khan has laid foundation of an independent foreign policy and gave clear message to imperialistic forces that Pakistan's soil would not be used for drone attacks. Russia and Ukraine exported around 50 percent of wheat production and the oil prices have soared to \$ 130 per barrel at international market, he added. He said that the Prime Minister provided big relief to the masses by reducing petrol, diesel and electricity prices keeping in view the prevailing economic situation. "Countries are not destroyed by floods and earthquake, rather these are destroyed by anarchy," he quoted while referring to the Opposition parties' upcoming long march. He urged the Opposition to show responsibility.

He said that there would be three local public holidays on March 22, 23 and 24 in Islamabad owing to Organization of Islamic Cooperation's (OIC) foreign ministers conference. He said that this time, Pakistan Day Parade would be a historic one as J-10 C aircraft would also be a part of flypast. Commenting on the current political situation in the country, Sheikh Rasheed said the no confidence motion against the Prime Minister would face defeat and Imran Khan would emerge victorious in all crisis. Defeat is the ultimate destiny of the Opposition parties, he added. He thanked that after over three and half years, the Opposition has realized that the umpire was neutral.

Denmark to hold referendum
on joining EU defence pact

"Ukraine's struggle is not just Ukraine's; it's a test of strength for everything we believe in: our values, democracy, human rights, peace and freedom"

NEWS DESK

COPENHAGEN: Denmark's prime minister has called for the country's citizens to overturn the country's opt-out from EU defence policy in a referendum to be held on 1 June, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. "Historic times call for historic decisions," Mette Frederiksen told a news conference on Sunday, adding that the government "very clearly calls on Danes to lift the opt-out on defence". Frederiksen also pledged to increase defence spending by 7bn kroner (£780m) over the next two years. Calling it the "largest investment in recent decades", Frederiksen set out plans to increase spending to 2% of GDP, in line with Nato membership requirements, by 2033. Participating in the common security and defence policy (CSDP) would enable Denmark to take part in joint EU military oper-



ations and to cooperate on the development and acquisition of military capabilities within the EU framework. "For me, as prime minister, this is a values-based decision," Frederiksen said. "Putin's pointless and brutal attack on Ukraine has heralded a new era in Europe, a new reality," she said. "Ukraine's struggle

is not just Ukraine's; it's a test of strength for everything we believe in: our values, democracy, human rights, peace and freedom." To accommodate higher defence spending, Denmark's current budget restrictions will be eased, and the deficit will turn negative after 2025. Frederiksen also said the main parliamentary parties had agreed that Denmark should become independent of Russian gas "as soon as possible", although no timeframe was stipulated. "We will also work towards this in the rest of Europe," she said. The referendum is part of an agreement reached on Sunday with a majority of parties in Denmark's parliament, the Folketing. The potential turnaround in the Nordic country's defence policy, in place for 30 years, comes as other European nations also overturn long-held positions on defence and security after the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February. Sweden and Finland, which are not mem-

bers of Nato, have both seen public support for joining the military alliance reach historically high levels since the start of the war, and this week both governments announced closer partnership with Nato and with each other on defence. Meanwhile, the German chancellor, Olaf Scholz, overturned decades of defence policy by announcing a 100bn defence spending increase and sending weapons to Ukraine. Denmark's upcoming referendum will be the ninth that it has held since the 1972 public vote on EU membership. After the public rejected the Maastricht Treaty in June 1992, Copenhagen obtained opt-outs in four sovereign areas: the single currency, justice and police matters, defence and EU citizenship. In December 2015, the Danes voted no to strengthening their cooperation with the European Union on police and security matters for fear of losing their sovereignty over immigration.

Warne died from
natural causes:
Thai police

BANGKOK: Australian cricket legend Shane Warne's death in Thailand on Friday was from natural causes, police have confirmed. A senior Thai police official said the post mortem exam showed no signs of foul play in the 52-year-old's death. Warne, who is considered to be one of the greatest cricketers of all time, died of a suspected heart attack on Koh Samui island, where he was holidaying. The Australian government is bringing his body back to Australia where he will be given a state funeral. Warne was a larger-than-life figure whose fame transcended sport and he inspired generations of fans. He was found unresponsive at the Thai villa where he was staying with friends. Attempts to revive him in hospital were unsuccessful. The post mortem exam showed Warne died of a "congenital disease", Songyot Chayaninporamet, deputy director of Samui Hospital, told a news conference, Reuters news agency reported.

"There is no Covid-19 infection and no sign of assault or murder." Thailand's deputy police spokesman Krissana Pattanachareon said in a statement: "Investigators received an autopsy report today in which a forensic doctor concludes the death was due to natural causes." He said the player's family had been informed and accepted the findings. Warne is survived by his three children with former wife Simone Callahan. Shane Warne was found unconscious in his room at this luxury villa on Koh Samui. The death of one of Australia's favourite sons has shocked the country, and brought a flood of tributes from cricket fans and others around the world. Warne's family have made their first comments following his sudden death, with his parents, children, ex-wife and brother saying how much they missed him. "To find words to adequately express our sadness is an impossible task for us, and looking to a future without Shane is inconceivable," parents Keith and Brigitte said in a statement. "I wish I could've hugged you tighter in what I didn't know were my final moments with you," his daughter Summer said. — Sports Desk

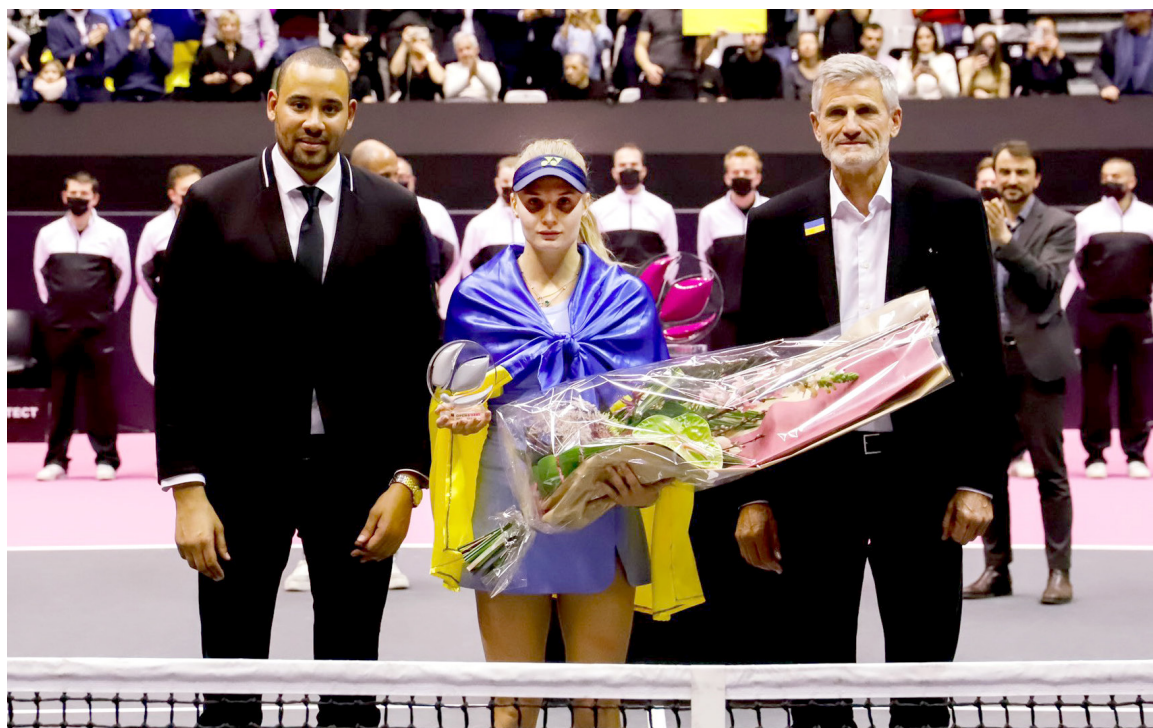
Gigi Hadid pledges to donate
earnings to Ukraine, Palestine

WEB DESK

CALIFORNIA: American supermodel from Dutch-Palestinian descent Gigi Hadid has announced that she will be donating her fashion month earnings towards relief efforts in Ukraine and Palestine. Over the past several weeks, the model has been a mainstay on the catwalks, having walked for the major fall 2022 shows in New York, Milan and Paris, including for the Michael Kors, Versace and Vivienne Westwood collections. Taking to Instagram, the supermodel wrote to her 72.7 million followers, "Having a set fashion month schedule has meant that my colleagues and I often present



new fashion collections during heartbreaking and traumatic times in history." "We don't have control over most of our work schedules, but we would like to walk 'for' something. Following in the footsteps of my friend @micarganaraz, I am pledging to donate my earnings from the fall 2022 shows to aid those suffering from the war in Ukraine, as well as continuing to support those experiencing the same in Palestine."

Yastremska donates Lyon
Open prize money to Ukraine

SPORTS DESK

PARIS: Ukraine's Dayana Yastremska who escaped Russian bombings just over a week ago, fell short of a remarkable title victory at the Lyon Open after being beaten by Zhang Shuai in the final. The 21-year-old, who arrived in Lyon last Saturday and spoke of being "woken up by bombs" when Russia invaded Ukraine three days earlier, was beaten 3-6 6-3 6-4 in the decider. Yastremska said she would use her prize money of about £12,000 to aid Ukraine. "It's been a tough week," she said. Yastremska, draped in her country's flag, tearfully addressed the

Lyon crowd and sent a message to her compatriots who remain in Ukraine. "If Ukrainian people are watching me, I want to say 'you guys are so strong, you have an amazing spirit, and I tried to fight for Ukraine'," she said. "The prize money I earn here I'm going to give to the Ukrainian Foundation to support Ukraine. "Thanks to the public for the support. I've been fighting all week, not only for myself but also for my country. "Everybody was supporting me a lot. I felt so much power from the people here." Zhang twice fought back from a break down in the third set to clinch her third WTA title. Both aggressive players took advantage of the indoor conditions to set up

numerous hard-hitting rallies. It was Yastremska who took charge in the first set, slamming a backhand winner to hold for 3-2, then using fierce forehands to force errors from Zhang in the following game and grab the only break of the opener. Yastremska had 13 winners to just three unforced errors in the first set. Yastremska broke serve to kick off the second set as well, but Zhang suddenly wrested the momentum away, reeling off four games in a row to take a commanding 4-1 lead. Zhang continued to press with her potent hitting, while Yastremska's unforced error count rose to 10 in the second set. Zhang finished the set with a pristine love hold to level the match.

'Moldova faces
humanitarian crisis'

CHISINAU: Moldova is facing a refugee crisis and requires urgent financial aid as tens of thousands of people fleeing the Russian invasion cross its border from Ukraine, the country's prime minister, Natalia Gavrilita, has said. Gavrilita told Euronews on Monday that of the 250,000 Ukrainians that have crossed the border since the war began, 120,000 have remained in Moldova. Europe's poorest country now has the largest proportion of refugees of any nation, she said, and is struggling to cope. "Moldova is, of course, also the country with the most limited resources, and we definitely need financial assistance and humanitarian assistance in order to be able to support this flow of refugees," she said, calling the situation "a massive humanitarian crisis." On March 3 Moldova's president, Maia Sandu, formally announced that the country would request candidate status from the European Union, echoing requests by Georgia and Ukraine since the Russian invasion began ten days ago. That request has raised questions about the future of Transnistria, a Russia-backed breakaway region that is not recognised by the international community and that Moldova considers an integral part of its territory. Russia has between 1,500 and 2,000 soldiers in the territory, some of which are classified peace-keepers with an international mandate. — Web Desk

Bilawal
criticizes...

FROM PAGE 01

Monday issued a 24-hour ultimatum to Prime Minister Imran Khan to immediately step down from his office, dissolve the assemblies and conduct free and fair election as the opposition party marches towards Islamabad to dislodge the government. He said: "If you have the courage to dissolve assemblies before we arrive in Islamabad, come down in fresh polls and compete with us; you will get to know the public's response," Bilawal reiterated his onslaught against the government's IMF deal, alleging that such an agreement was the reason for the spike in petroleum prices, electricity tariffs and basic commodities' prices. He claimed that the PM Imran Khan was panicking, which was reflected in the derogatory remarks he was using against the opposition leadership. The PPP chairman claimed that his party had steered the country "out of the crisis" during their rule. He accused the government of providing relief to the rich instead of the poor. Earlier, PPP senior leader Qamar Zaman Kaira in his speech said lambasted the PTI government adding its days were numbered. He welcomed the Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari in Lalamusa. He also thanked the people of Lalamusa for according a rousing welcome to Bilawal Bhutto. Former Prime Minister Rajaz Pervez Ashraf also spoke on the occasion.

PM for
solving...

FROM PAGE 01

that Pakistan had maintained a principled position that it would only be a partner for peace, the premier stressed the urgent need for a ceasefire as well as the importance of humanitarian relief for civilians in Ukraine. "The prime minister underlined that Pakistan had friendly ties with Russia and Ukraine and had remained in close contact with both sides. The prime minister expressed the hope that the dispute would be resolved through dialogue and diplomacy. "The two leaders agreed that countries like Pakistan could play a facilitating role in these endeavours and that both sides would remain closely engaged to promote shared objectives," the statement said. Meanwhile, the premier underscored the importance of Pakistan's relations with the EU and conveyed that he was looking forward to his visit to Brussels to meet the bloc's leadership. "He also extended an invitation to Michel to visit Pakistan," the statement said.

PM for swift
persecution...

FROM PAGE 01

He also said that the public realises that "elements are trying to create disharmony on the basis of sectarianism and hate speech, but the State will never allow such designs to succeed." Meanwhile, emphasising the need to strengthen the role of the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA), the committee stressed coordinating measures essential for countering terrorism and capacity building of counter-terrorism departments. The meeting, according to the statement, also highlighted that the provinces need to allocate more resources for conducting effective investigations by adopting scientific techniques and setting up modern forensic labs and to accord conclusive end to terrorism cases in courts of law.

Interior Division's secretary presented a detailed briefing on the implementation status of NAP, including measures taken to choke terror financing, counter violent extremism, and investigation and prosecution of terrorism cases. The secretary also briefed the meeting on the government's zero-tolerance policy towards militancy, capacity building of law enforcement agencies, regulation and registration of seminaries, the merger of former FATA areas, reforms in the criminal justice system, eliminating sectarian terrorism, curbing smuggling, narco-traffic and human trafficking, the reconciliation process in Balochistan, and issues related to refugees.

Pak vs Aus: Draw looms over Rawalpindi test

SPORTS DESK

RAWALPINDI: Australia came close to matching Pakistan's first innings total of 476-4 declared in the opening Test as the run-feast in Rawalpindi appeared to be heading for a dull draw on Monday. Wet outfield caused by overnight rain not only wiped out the entire morning session on day four but also effectively dashed prospects of victory by either side in Australia's first test in Pakistan in 24 years. The touring side finished the penultimate day on 449-7, 27 runs behind, after four days of bat dominating ball on a flat track at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium. Marnus Labuschagne made 90 and Steve Smith contributed 78 in a strong batting performance by the tourists. Mitchell Starc was on 12 when bad light stopped play



with skipper Pat Cummins on four at the other end. Earlier, Pakistan struck twice in the morning session after the delayed start to the penultimate day's action. Armed with the second new ball,

Shaheen Afridi induced a loose drive from Labuschagne and Abdullah Shafique dived to his right to take a sharp catch in the slip. Labuschagne's fluent knock included 12 boundaries.

Travis Head made eight before edging spinner Nauman Ali and wicketkeeper Mohammad Rizwan took a smart catch behind the stumps. Cameron Green (48), who was

not even born when Australia last toured Pakistan in 1998, began well but fell short of what could have been the fifth half-century in their top six. Green fluffed his sweep short against Nauman to find Iftikhar at short fine leg. Left-arm spinner Nauman (4-107) kept bowling outside the leg-stump, which also earned him the prize wicket of Smith who gloved a ball to Rizwan attempting a sweep shot. Smith was the fourth batsman in Australia's top four who passed the 50-mark but could not convert it into a hundred. Alex Carey made 19 but never looked convincing and eventually lost his off-stump to fast bowler Naseem Shah. Pakistan skipper Babar Azam brought himself in for the final over of the day but Starc and Cummins had no problem in dealing with his innocuous part-time off-spin.

Briefs

**Over 4,300
Uzbeks
evacuated
from Ukraine**

NEWS DESK

TASHKENT: The total score of Uzbeks evacuated from Ukraine through Poland reached 4,359 as of the morning of March 7, Yusup-Kabulzhanov, spokesman to the Uzbek Foreign Ministry, said. From February 28 to March 7, a total of 19 special flights of Uzbekistan Airways were performed. Another evacuation flight is scheduled for Monday. Currently there are about 350 Uzbeks in Poland. Of these, about 80 people are accommodated in the accumulation zone of the state border of Poland, and about 270 people are awaiting for departure at the Katowice airport, from where flights to Tashkent are operated. "The Uzbek Embassy in Ukraine is in constant contact with compatriots. Diplomats are in various regions of Ukraine, including in the war zone, and are working to evacuate our citizens," Yusup-Kabulzhanov concluded.

**India arrests
former stock
exchange
boss**

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI: The former chief executive of India's National Stock Exchange has been arrested in a bizarre corporate misgovernance scandal featuring a supposed Himalayan yogi. Chitra Ramkrishna - a high-flying executive once feted as the "queen of the bourse" - was detained by Central Bureau of Investigation, India's equivalent of the FBI, in Delhi, a senior officer said on Monday. Ramkrishna allegedly took business advice from a mystic throughout her 2013-2016 tenure at one of the world's largest derivatives exchanges. A 190-page report released by regulators last month revealed damning details of how Ramkrishna, 59, shared sensitive information with a spiritual adviser she supposedly met by the River Ganges. The former boss of India's largest stock exchange "had abdicated all her powers to the unknown person" and "was merely a puppet in his hands", regulators said in the report, without identifying the yogi.

Last month, federal police arrested Ramkrishna's former protegee Anand Subramanian, whom she hired and later promoted on an astronomical salary, despite him having no relevant experience, allegedly on the advice of the yogi. Spiritual leaders and "godmen" have long enjoyed vast followings in India and the business world is no exception in the highly religious nation of 1.4 billion people. The scandal began in 2015 during allegations of market manipulation with brokers said to have been given preferential access to the bourse.

**Israeli
troops kill
Palestinian
teenager**

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM: Israeli troops have killed a 16-year-old Palestinian boy in the town of Abu Dis in occupied East Jerusalem, Palestine's Health Ministry said. Soldiers on Sunday shot dead Yamen Jafal, who they claimed threw Molotov cocktails at an army checkpoint, the ministry said in a statement, adding Jafal was shot dead "by the occupation forces." The Israeli army alleged two people threw Molotov cocktails at a checkpoint, saying one of them was killed and the other fled after soldiers opened fire. Images were shared on social media of the Israeli police using tear gas in Abu Dis. On Sunday, another Palestinian youth was killed by Israeli forces in Jerusalem's Old City. Israeli police released a statement claiming the 19-year-old wounded two police officers in a knife attack. The Palestinian ministry identified him as Karim Jamal al Qawasmii. Dozens of Palestinians have been killed by Israeli troops in recent months for allegedly attempting to carry out stabbing or car ramming attacks. Palestinian authorities and rights groups, meanwhile, accuse Israeli forces of deliberately killing Palestinians with no risk to their lives. - APP

Calm, rational mind needed to solve Ukraine crisis: China

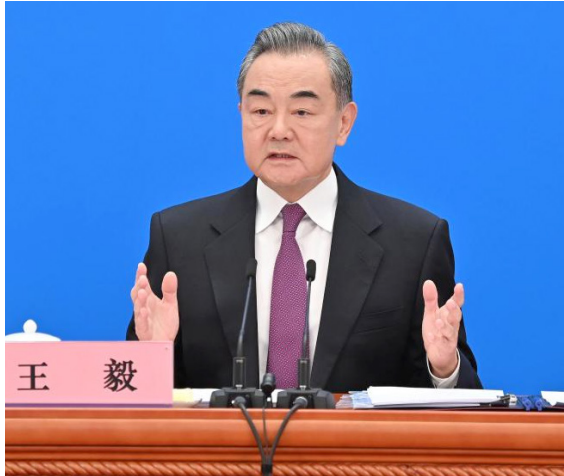
"The real goal of the US Indo-Pacific strategy is to establish an Indo-Pacific version of NATO," Wang said, calling the Indo-Pacific strategy as "sinister, return of bloc politics and disrupter of peace"

FOREIGN DESK

BEIJING: China on Monday said it is willing to play a "constructive role" to facilitate dialogue for peace and work alongside the international community "when needed to carry out necessary mediation", said Foreign Minister Wang Yi when asked about Russia's war on Ukraine. "Calm and rational mind are needed rather than pouring oil on the fire," Wang said, calling the situation "complicated" which requires more dialogue. Addressing the Foreign Ministry's annual news conference in Beijing, Wang said: "China believes that to resolve the current crisis we must uphold the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and respect and protect the

sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries." "We must adhere to the principle of individual security and accommodate the legitimate security concerns of the parties involved. We must settle disputes by peaceful means through dialogue and negotiation," he added.

Calling for dialogue and cooperation between China and Europe, Wang said: "The basis of mutual respect and mutual benefit will add more stabilizing factors to an unstable world." He said Beijing will send humanitarian aid to Ukraine, but attempts to "politicize humanitarian assistance" should be avoided. Russia's war on Ukraine has been met with outrage from the international community, with the European Union, UK, and US, among others,



imposing a range of economic sanctions on Moscow. At least 364 civilians have been killed and 759 others injured in Ukraine since Russia launched a war against the Eastern European country on Feb. 24, according to UN figures, with the real toll

feared to be higher. More than 1.5 million people have fled Ukraine to neighboring countries, according to the UN Refugee Agency. Wang criticized the US strategy for the wider Asia-Pacific. "The real goal of the US

Indo-Pacific strategy is to establish an Indo-Pacific version of NATO," Wang said, calling the Indo-Pacific strategy as "sinister, return of bloc politics and disrupter of peace."

"The US has '54321' strategy," he said, pointing to Five Eyes, Quad, AUKUS, and bilateral relationships in the region. "They are doomed to fail." On China-US relations, Wang repeated the two countries need to "replace the 'competitive-collaborative-adversarial' trichotomy with the three principles of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation." The Chinese foreign minister stressed there is no comparison between the "Ukraine crisis" and Taiwan issue. "Those talking of Ukraine's sovereignty undermine

China's sovereignty," he said, calling Taiwan as an "inalienable part" of China. "These are double standards," he said. "Some forces in the US have condoned separatists in Taiwan to undermine rejuvenation of China." As the world focuses on the Russia-Ukraine war, observers are also closely watching China's moves regarding Taiwan, which it sees as a breakaway province.

Taipei, however, has insisted on its independence since 1949 and maintains diplomatic relations with at least 14 countries. "Taiwan's future and hope lies in the peaceful development of cross-strait relations and reunification with the mainland," Wang said. On relations with India, Wang said the border tensions "should not affect bigger picture."

UK seeks to toughen sanctions on Russia

DNA

LONDON: UK MPs are set to pass a new law aimed at toughening sanctions on Russia over its invasion of Ukraine. Prime Minister Boris Johnson said the Economic Crime Bill will let British authorities root out money linked to Russian President Vladimir Putin. "We will pursue Putin's allies in the UK with the full backing of the law, beyond doubt or legal challenge," Johnson said.

The UK Prime Minister also met Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Dutch leader Mark Rutte on Monday to discuss toughening the West's response to the war in Ukraine. Critics say the British government have allowed ill-gotten money to slosh into UK properties, banks and businesses for years. The anti-corruption group Transparency International says Russians linked to the Kremlin or accused of corruption own £1.5 billion

Russia demands protection of diplomatic missions

MOSCOW: A spokeswoman for Russia's foreign ministry on Monday demanded France to protect Moscow's representative offices in the country, alleging an attack had occurred at a building used by a Russian government agency in Paris. "We demand that the French authorities ensure the proper security of our official institutions," wrote Maria Zakharova, a Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman, on Telegram. Zakharova wrote that "a bottle of flammable liquid" had been thrown at a building used by Russia's international cooperation agency Rosstrudnichestvo on the night of Sunday to Monday. "Nobody was harmed in the attack" because it hit the fence before reaching the target, Zakharova said. Zakharova wrote that Russia's consulate in the Ukrainian city of Lviv had suffered a similar attack in December 2021. "Therefore there is no need to act as if such extremist acts are some sort of 'righteous anger' connected to the special operation (of the Russian military)," she wrote. - Agencies

(41.8 billion) worth of London property. Opposition politicians and anti-corruption campaigners say Johnson's Conservative party has turned London into a "laundromat" for dirty cash. Johnson has repeatedly claimed that Britain is lead-

ing international efforts to punish Putin over the invasion of Ukraine. The UK has slapped sanctions on a host of Russian banks and businesses, measures the government says have curtailed Russian economic activity. So far, London has

sanctioned only a handful of Kremlin-linked individuals with assets in Britain, fewer than either the European Union or the United States. The Economic Crime Bill was set to be passed in the Autumn but has now been rushed through parliament for approval. The law will require overseas firms with assets in Britain to reveal their true owners, an attempt to crack down on money-laundering and the use of shadowy shell companies to buy businesses and properties.

Initially, the legislation gave businesses 18 months to comply, but the deadline has now been shortened to six months. Labour Party business spokesman Jonathan Reynolds had still criticised the grace period, stating that it amounts to a "get out of London free card" for oligarchs. Opposition lawmakers are urging the government to immediately seize oligarchs' properties in Britain after Italy seized 143 million euros in luxury yachts and villas.



Queen Elizabeth holds meeting with Trudeau

LONDON: The Queen has held her first in-person engagement since catching COVID, meeting Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. The monarch held an audience with Mr Trudeau at Windsor Castle today, as he is in the UK for talks on the war in Ukraine with Prime Minister Boris Johnson and his Dutch counterpart Mark Rutte. The 95-year-old, who usually takes a neutral stand on political matters, greeted Mr Trudeau in front of a vase of blue and yellow flowers and also wore a blue patterned dress, in what appeared to be a subtle message of support for Ukraine.

Blue and yellow are the colours on Ukraine's national flag. The Queen tested positive for coronavirus on 20 February, just days after Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall both contracted the virus. The monarch, who is also Queen of Canada, was pictured standing and smiling warmly at Mr Trudeau as he held her right hand in both of his. - DNA

Ukrainian, Russian FMs to meet in Turkey

FOREIGN DESK

ANKARA: Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu said Ukrainian and Russian foreign ministers will meet in Antalya on Thursday as part of Turkey's mediation efforts to find a solution in the face of Moscow's invasion. Speaking to reporters on Monday, Çavuşoğlu said Ankara exerted great efforts to organize a meeting between the two sides. "Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov and Ukrainian Foreign Minister Kuleba will meet in Antalya on Thursday, March 10," Çavuşoğlu said, noting that the meeting, which will be held on the sidelines of the Antalya Diplomacy Forum, will be a trilateral one. Expressing hope that the meeting "will be a turning point" and "important step" towards peace and stability, the Turkish foreign minister said Ankara would "continue to make efforts for a lasting peace." Turkey has sought to mediate between Russia and Ukraine and offered on several occasions to host talks. Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova confirmed the meeting on Telegram. Kuleba had said on Saturday he was open to talks with Lavrov but only if they were "meaningful". On Sunday, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan held a phone call with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin, in which he told the Russian leader that Turkey is ready to contribute to the solution of the Ukraine problem by peaceful means as soon as possible. Çavuşoğlu also spoke with his Russian and Ukrainian counterparts on Sunday, discussing the latest developments in Ukraine.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi unveiling the Pakistan's Diamond Jubilee logo to commemorate the 75 years of Independence at Aiwan-e-Sadr. - DNA

Brent crude nears 14-year high of \$140

National Australia Bank's Tapas Strickland said: "Global growth fears abound given the surge in commodity prices, with 'stagflation' again rearing its head in what must be akin to a horror movie for a central bank

AGENCIES

NEW YORK: Brent oil prices soared to a near 14-year high of \$140 late on Sunday before hovering just a little on Monday as traders fretted over the fallout from Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Equity markets also plunged Monday, while safe haven gold broke \$2,000. Brent North Sea crude oil for May delivery reached \$139.13 shortly after electronic trading opened around 11 p.m. GMT, heading towards a 2008 record high before retreating slightly over the next hour. The European benchmark crude hit its record price of \$147.50 per barrel in July 2008. By 12:30 a.m. GMT,

Brent crude had dropped a little more to \$128.77 per barrel - 9.02% higher than its closing price on Friday. The price per barrel of Brent oil has increased 33% since Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24. New York's benchmark West Texas Intermediate oil also soared Sunday to \$130.50 per barrel for April delivery. It, too, then dropped slightly over the next hour and a half. By 12:30 a.m. GMT, WTI crude was at \$125.15 per barrel, an 8.18% increase from its closing price on Friday. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Sunday that Washington was in "active discussions" with European nations about banning Russian oil imports

as further economic penalty against Moscow, although he stopped short of announcing an outright boycott.

Even if oil is technically still exempt from sanctions, Russian oil exporters are struggling to find buyers. Shell is one of the only companies still buying Russian oil, although it

said it would donate the profits to Ukrainian causes. Asked Sunday on CNN about Shell's announcement, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba urged Shell and other energy giants to cut off Moscow's biggest revenue source and "stop buying Russian oil." "Russian oil and gas

smells of Ukrainian blood," he said. Meanwhile, trading floors were a sea of red in early exchanges Monday with experts warning of a period of stagflation with the spike in crude likely to light a fire under already high inflation. Besides oil, other commodities sourced from the region such as wheat and metals were also sharply higher. And Mike Muller of Vitol warned of further pain. "We have plenty of twists and turns to come," he told a podcast produced by Dubai-based consultant and publisher Gulf Intelligence. "While I think the world is already pricing in the fact there'll be an inability to take in a serious amount of Russian oil in

the western hemisphere. I don't think we've priced in everything yet."

The surge in crude is giving central banks a headache as they start to tighten pandemic-era monetary policy to fight inflation, which is already at a 40-year high in the United States. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) warned at the weekend that the war and sanctions on Russia will have a "severe impact" on the global economy. National Australia Bank's Tapas Strickland said: "Global growth fears abound given the surge in commodity prices, with 'stagflation' again rearing its head in what must be akin to a horror movie for a central bank.



Netflix, TikTok block services in Russia

WEB DESK

MOSCOW: Netflix and TikTok suspended most of their services in Russia on Sunday as the government cracks down on what people and media outlets can say about Russia's war in Ukraine. Pulling the plug on online entertainment - and information - is likely to further isolate the country and its people after a growing number of multinational businesses have cut off Russia from vital financial services, technology and a variety of consumer products in response to Western economic sanctions and global outrage over the invasion of Ukraine. U.S. credit card companies Visa, Mastercard and American Express all said over the weekend they would cut service in Russia. South Korea's Samsung Electronics, a leading supplier of both smartphones and computer chips, said it would halt product shipments to the country, joining other big tech companies such as Apple, Microsoft, Intel and Dell. And two of the so-called Big Four accounting firms said Sunday they were cutting ties to the country. KPMG and PricewaterhouseCoopers both they would end their relationships with their Russia-based member firms, each of which employs thousands of people. Ukraine's minister of digital transformation, Mykhailo Fedorov, called on U.S. technology companies to do more Sunday to hit back against Russia. He tweeted open letters asking Apple and Google to shut down their app stores in Russia and for Amazon and Microsoft to suspend their cloud computing services.

Syria: Two civilians killed in Israeli airstrike

FOREIGN DESK

DAMASCUS: Israel fired several missiles toward Syrian military positions near the capital Damascus Monday, killing two civilians and causing material damage, Syria's defense ministry said. It was the first Israeli attack inside Syria since Russia, a key backer of President Bashar Assad, invaded Ukraine. The defense ministry said in a statement that Israeli warplanes flying over neighboring Lebanon fired the missiles toward Syria, adding that Syrian air defenses shot down most of the missiles.

It gave no further details or say how the civilians were killed. Israel did not comment on the attack and rarely acknowledges such operations. But it has launched hundreds of strikes on targets inside government-controlled parts of Syria during its past decade of civil war. Israel relies on Russia for security coordination in Syria, where Russia has a strong military presence, forcing Israel's prime minister search for middle ground between Russia and Ukraine. Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett has also assumed the unlikely role of mediator between Russia and Ukraine. Monday's attack was the first since Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, sparking the current war. On that same day, three Syrian soldiers were killed in an Israeli attack near Damascus. - APP

Covid: Death toll nears 6 million

BANGKOK: The official global death toll from COVID-19 is on the verge of eclipsing 6 million - underscoring that the pandemic, now entering its third year, is far from over.

The milestone is the latest tragic reminder of the unrelenting nature of the pandemic even as people are shedding masks, travel is resuming and businesses are reopening around the globe. The death toll, compiled by Johns Hopkins University, stood at 5,999,158 as of Monday midday. Remote Pacific islands, whose isolation had protected them for more than two years, are just now grappling with their first outbreaks and deaths, fueled by the highly contagious omicron variant. Hong Kong, which is seeing deaths soar, is testing its entire population of 7.5 million three times this month as it clings to mainland China's "zero-COVID" strategy. - Agencies

Briefs

Wildfires force mass evacuations in Florida

WEB DESK

FLORIDA: The Florida Forest Service said on Sunday that nearly 10,000 acres (4,047 hectares) were on fire in the area as the south-eastern US state experiences an unusually early start to its fire season. It tweeted on Monday that altogether 168 fires are burning across the state. Residents from at least 1,100 homes, along with veterans in a state-owned nursing home in Panama City, were forced to flee on Sunday as blazes moved quickly across Bay County. Firefighters from all over the state have been deployed to the county to battle the wildfires. So far, no deaths have been reported. One of the fires, named the Adkins Avenue Fire, destroyed two structures and damaged another 12 homes after breaking out on Friday. A much larger blaze, dubbed the Bertha Swamp Fire, started in neighboring Gulf County on Friday but spread to Bay and Calhoun counties on Saturday. It also forced the evacuation of scores of homes. Local authorities say they don't know when residents will be able to return to their homes. A shelter has been opened at a fairground for displaced residents.

WHO felicitates Pakistan on vaccination milestone

ISLAMABAD: The World Health Organization (WHO) Pakistan on Thursday extended its felicitations to the government of the country to achieve the mark of over 100 million individuals complete vaccination against the COVID-19 virus. The WHO Country Office Pakistan took to Twitter to congratulate the country after achieving a whopping target mass inoculations against the contagious virus. It wrote, "Heartiest Congratulations to Pakistan! WHO applauds Govt. of Pakistan for having over 100 million individuals fully vaccinated against COVID-19 virus."

"This indicates the tremendous efforts made by the Govt. of Pakistan in ensuring that everyone across the country has access to COVID-19 vaccination." - APP

Moderna announces first African vaccine facility

AGENCIES

NAIROBI: US vaccine maker Moderna has announced that it will build its first mRNA jab-manufacturing facility in Africa after signing an agreement with Kenya's government to produce up to 500 million doses a year, reports AFP.

The company said it expected to invest \$500 million in the new facility, which will produce vaccines for the continent of 1.3 billion people whose population has been largely shut out of access to Covid-19 jabs.

Moderna said it hopes to use the facility to supply doses of its Covid-19 jab to African nations as early as next year, in a bid to boost vaccine coverage on the world's least immunised continent.

Meanwhile, the official global death toll from Covid-19 eclipsed 6 million - underscoring that the pandemic, now entering its third year, is far from over.

Remote Pacific islands, whose isolation had protected them for more than two years, are just now grappling with their first outbreaks and deaths, fuelled by the highly contagious Omicron variant.

Hong Kong, which is seeing deaths soar, is testing its entire population of 7.5 million three times this month as it clings to mainland China's "zero-Covid" strategy.

Russia opens humanitarian corridors to Ukrainian cities

Those who want to leave Kyiv will also be able to be airlifted to Russia, the ministry said, adding it would use drones to monitor the evacuation

NEWS DESK

KYIV: Russia's military held fire and opened humanitarian corridors in several Ukrainian cities on Monday, the Defence Ministry said, after fighting halted weekend evacuation efforts and civilian casualties. The corridors opened at 10 am Moscow time (0700 GMT) from the capital Kyiv as well as the cities of Kharkiv, Mariupol and Sumy and were being set up at the personal request of French President Emmanuel Macron, the ministry said. According to maps published by the RIA news agency, the corridor from Kyiv will lead to Russian ally Belarus, and civilians from Kharkiv will only have a corridor leading to Russia. Corridors from Mariupol and Sumy will lead both to other Ukrainian cities and to Russia. Those who want to leave Kyiv will also be able to be airlifted to Russia, the ministry said, adding it would use drones to monitor the evacuation. "Attempts by the Ukrainian side to deceive Russia and the whole civilised world ... are useless this time," the ministry said. Russia calls the campaign it launched on Feb. 24 a "special military operation". It has repeatedly denied attacking civilian areas and says it has no plans to occupy Ukraine. Oil prices soared to their highest levels since 2008 in Asian trade after the Biden administration said it was exploring ban-

Russia boycotts UN court hearing

THE HAGUE: Russia did not attend a hearing Monday at the UN's top court where Ukraine asked for an immediate halt to Moscow's invasion. The court was criticised by the head of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), and by Ukraine which said the empty Russian seats "speak loudly". Kyiv filed the case shortly after Vladimir Putin's February 24 invasion, accusing Russia of illegally justifying its war by falsely alleging genocide in Ukraine's Donetsk and Lugansk regions. The court set two days for urgent hearings at the Peace Palace in The Hague but Russian ambassador Alexander Shulgin wrote to the court and "indicated that his government did not intend to participate". "The court regrets the non-appearance of the Russian Federation in these oral proceedings," ICJ President Joan Donoghue said. Ukraine wants the court to take provisional measures ordering Russia to "immediately suspend the military operations", pending a full judgment in the dispute that could take years. "The fact that Russia's seats are empty speaks loudly. They are not here in this court of law, they are on a battlefield, waging aggressive war against my country," Ukraine's representative Anton Korotnyuk told the court. "This is how Russia solves disputes." Korynevych added that the court "has a responsibility to act." "Russia must be stopped, and the court has a role to play in stopping that," he said. Russia had been scheduled to give its reply on Tuesday. - Agencies

ning imports of Russian oil. Russia provides 7% of the global supply. Japan, which counts Russia as its fifth-biggest supplier of crude oil, is also in discussion with the United States and European countries about possibly banning Russian oil imports, Kyodo News reported on Monday.

Europe relies on Russia for crude oil and natural gas but has become more open to the idea of banning Russian products, a source familiar with the discussions told Reuters. The general staff of Ukraine's armed forces said Russian forces were "beginning to accumulate resources for the

storming of Kyiv", a city of 3 million, after days of slow progress in their main advance south from Belarus. About 200,000 people remained trapped in the besieged Black Sea port of Mariupol, most sleeping underground to escape more than six days of fighting that has cut off food, water, power and heating, according to the Ukrainian authorities. About half of the 400,000 people in the city were due to be evacuated on Sunday but that effort was aborted for a second day when a ceasefire plan collapsed as the sides accused each other of failing to stop shooting and shelling. Ukrainian authorities said on Monday the southern city of Mykolayiv was being shelled. The civilian death toll from hostilities across Ukraine since Russia launched the invasion was 364, including more than 20 children, the United Nations said on Sunday, adding that hundreds were wounded. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken claimed the United States had seen credible reports of deliberate attacks on civilians and was documenting them to support a potential war crimes investigation. As anti-war protests took place around the world, Ukraine renewed its appeal to the West to toughen sanctions and also requested more weapons, including Russian-made planes. Blinken said the United States was considering how it could backfill aircraft for Poland if it decided to supply its warplanes to Ukraine.

PPP allowed holding public meeting at D Chowk

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The administration of federal capital Monday permitted the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) to bring its long march to D Chowk and hold a public meeting there. PPP Central Secretariat Incharge Sibtul Haider Bukhari said that the Islamabad administration had been informed about the details of the public meeting following which the latter allowed the PPP to bring its long march to D Chowk. He also expressed hope that the district administration would cooperate with the party in its arrangements for the public meeting, adding that the long march would be accorded a warm welcome at D Chowk.

Russia wants "equal rights" in Iran nuclear deal

NEWS DESK

TEHRAN: A revived Iranian nuclear deal must secure "equal rights" for everyone involved, Russia said on Monday, after Iran asked for details of Moscow's demands for US guarantees on restoring the accord.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Saturday that, before backing the Iran nuclear deal, Moscow wants written assurances from Washington that Western sanctions imposed on it over the Ukraine war will not affect its economic and military cooperation with Tehran.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Sunday dismissed these demands as "irrelevant". Sanctions on Russia over its invasion of Ukraine "have nothing to do with the Iran nuclear deal", he said on CBS talk show "Face the Nation".

Tehran made clear Monday it was seeking clarifications, with Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh saying "details" were needed through diplomatic channels.

"Iran's peaceful nuclear cooperation should not be affected or restricted by any sanctions, including Iran's peaceful nuclear cooperation with Russia" and other countries, Khatibzadeh told reporters.

Hours later the Russian embassy in Tehran tweeted that Lavrov and Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian had spoken by telephone.

During the call, "it was emphasized that the resuscitation of the JCPOA should ensure that all its participants have equal rights regarding the unhindered development of cooperation in all areas", it said using the acronym of the 2015 nuclear deal.

UAE removes PCR mandate for travelers

DNA

KARACHI: Good news comes for the air travellers as the condition of the Covid-19 Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test has been abolished on arrival in UAE. The travellers have no longer to undergo a Polymerase Chain Reaction test on arrival in the UAE via Abu Dhabi.

However, it will now be optional for them to take the test on arrival in Abu Dhabi if they wish. It will cost Dh40 to take the test at the "Arrivals" Polymerase Chain Reaction facility.

According to Etihad Airways, passengers, whether they have been vaccinated or not, will no longer have to undergo Polymerase Chain Reaction tests at Abu Dhabi Airport. This means that vaccinated people are now exempt from Polymerase Chain Reaction tests before and after departure.

As per Etihad Airways, only non-vaccinated persons must submit a negative PCR test 48 hours prior to departure and must have a QR code. Healthy people are required to have a 30-day old recovery certificate. Travellers departing from or transiting through Abu Dhabi do not need a PCR test unless it is a requirement at their end destination.

Over 95% of Pakistanis evacuated from Ukraine

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Ambassador to Romania Dr Zafar Iqbal Monday said that more than 95% of Pakistanis have been evacuated from Ukraine. The stranded Pakistanis in Ukraine have been evacuated to Poland, Romania and Hungary, he said while speaking to Radio Pakistan's current affair program. "In Romania, we have received 423 Pakistanis", he said. He said that over 130 students have already reached their destinations and 60 more would also move to their destinations once the flights were available. Dr Zafar Iqbal said that they have established camp offices near borders and the Pakistani citizens were now staying in hotels where all their expenses were being paid by the government of Pakistan. It is good news that no Pakistani in Ukraine is injured, he said, adding that we are hopeful for 100% successful evacuation of all the Pakistani citizens stranded in Ukraine. - DNA



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan distributing cheques among the beneficiaries of Ehsaas Kafalat and Ehsaas Nashonuma. - DNA

US, Pakistan Air Force carry out joint exercise

ISLAMABAD: For the first time in three years, the U.S. and Pakistan Air Forces held a joint exercise, Falcon Talon 2022, at a Pakistan Operational Air Force Base from February 26-March 4 to further U.S. and Pakistani security cooperation objectives in the region. Chargé d'affaires Angela P. Aggeler and visiting Director



US Charge d Affaires Aggeler being greeted upon arrival at PAF Base Mushaf by PAF senior leadership. - DNA

of Exercises and Engagements at U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) Major General Steven deMilliano participated in a closing ceremony of the joint exercise between the United States and Pakistan Air Forces on March 4. Chargé Aggeler congratulated and thanked the Pakistan Air Force for hosting this important exercise. "It is a real pleasure to welcome so many members of the U.S. Air Force to Pakistan and to see F-16 aircraft operated by both Pakistan and the United States airmen, flying and training side by side," said Chargé Aggeler, who observed part of the final exercise and greeted U.S. and Pakistan airmen and women as well as technical staff of both Air Forces. The Chargé emphasized that "through exercises like Falcon Talon 2022, we are sustaining a partnership that helps build regional peace, security, and stability with a shared understanding of threats and means to mitigate them." This exercise event was the fourth of its kind, with previous iterations held in 2019, 2011, and 2009. - DNA

EU leaders oppose banning Russian energy imports

British PM Boris Johnson said moving away from Russian oil and gas was "the right thing to do" but had to be a "step by step" process

BERLIN: The leaders of Germany, Britain and the Netherlands cautioned Monday against abruptly banning Russian energy imports as part of sanctions against Moscow over its invasion of Ukraine, saying there were no immediate alternative supplies. The pushback came after the United States on Sunday said it was in "active discussions" with European nations about shutting down Russian oil imports as further economic penalty over Moscow's aggression. "Europe has deliberately exempted energy supplies from Russia from sanctions," German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said in a statement. "Supplying Europe with energy for heat generation, mobility, electricity supply and industry cannot be secured in any other way at the moment," he said. "It is therefore of essential importance for the provision of public services and the daily lives of our citizens." Russia is one of the world's biggest crude producers and is also a leading supplier of natural gas. Europe's top economy Germany is heavily dependent on Russian fossil fuels, importing an estimated 55 percent of its gas and 40 percent of its oil and coal from Russia. Like other European nations, Germany has vowed to wean itself off Russian energy by boosting the use of renewables, but the government has stressed that the switch will take time. In London, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said moving away from Russian oil and gas was "the right thing to do" but had to be a "step by step" process. "We have got to make sure we have substitute supply. One of the things we are looking at is the possibility of using more of our own hydrocarbons," Johnson said at a Downing Street press conference. - Agencies

Aleem Khan joins Jahangir Tareen's PTI group

The Opposition has upped the ante to move a no-confidence motion against the government in the national and Punjab assemblies. They have also contacted several PTI leaders, including Tareen

DNA

LAHORE: Former senior minister Punjab Aleem Khan has joined Jahangir Khan Tareen's PTI faction with the aim to "save" the party after "loyalists were sidelined" following Prime Minister Imran Khan's rise to power. Khan, addressing a press conference after a meeting at Tareen's residence, said if a no-confidence is moved against Chief Minister Punjab Usman Buzdar, then the group would decide a future course of action accordingly. The Opposition has upped the ante to move a no-confidence motion against the government in the national and Punjab assemblies. They have also contacted several PTI leaders, including Tareen. The former provincial minister said he would not have been "sad" had PTI's popularity been growing, but lamented that the situation of the government was dismal. "PTI voters and loyalists are upset over the dismal situation of the government in Punjab. Therefore, we decided that a like-minded [group] should be formed who had sacrificed for the party." The ex-minister said he spoke to around 40 MPAs in the last four days, and a majority of them expressed concerns over the situa-

tion of the government in Punjab. He noted that the former PTI secretary-general played an important role in the party's rise to power. "We are thankful to him [...] he is sick at the moment, so I asked Nawani to hold the meeting at Tareen's residence. This was done in order to give a message to Tareen that despite his absence, he is not forgotten," he said. Khan praised all the PTI members who "stood by Tareen in his difficult times", as he lauded the estranged party leader for remaining "determined to his cause". Khan said it was still not clear why Tareen was not given importance after PTI

came into power. "All those who struggled alongside Imran Khan for a "Naya Pakistan" were sidelined, and we still don't know the reason behind it." "Maybe once a government is formed, new people surround the leader, and the loyalists - who supported the leader during his hard times - are cornered," Khan expressed. He said Tareen has played an important role in PTI's rise to power, noting that the like-minded group would work to save the party. "Tareen will also be returning to Pakistan in a few days." The development comes after Khan attended a meeting at Tareen's residence today

to attend an important meeting of Tareen's PTI faction regarding the no-confidence motion, sources said.

The sources had said among the 40 Punjab MPAs that Khan had met, 10 of them were ministers, however, their names will be kept secret till the current political scenario becomes clear. Ahead of the Opposition's plan to table the no-confidence motion against Prime Minister Imran Khan, PTI leader Khan has been contacted by the senior leadership of PML-N as well, sources said. Responding to the press conference, according to Geo News, Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Political Communication Shahbaz Gill said Khan was "a brother" and disputes often takes place "between siblings". He admitted that anyone can have reservations regarding the way of governance, but noted that the PTI-led government was "ready to resolve the concerns" of the group. "Aleem Khan has not yet issued a clear course of action [...] we are not worried, as these are our own people," the SAPM said. Meanwhile, Governor Sindh Imran Ismail said PM Imran Khan has given him the mandate to hold talks with Khan and he would be leaving for Lahore today.

